University of Alberta

Images of the Warrior: Yvain and the Heike Monogatari

by

Mark Adrian Groenewold

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Comparative Literature, Religion, and Film/Media Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1999

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Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 1999

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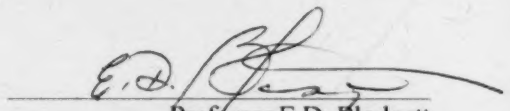

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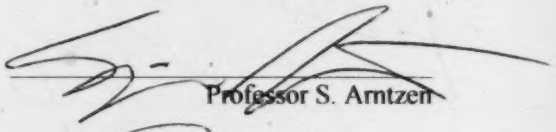

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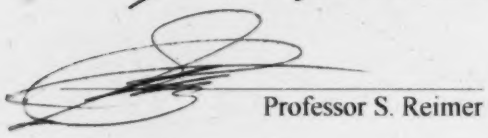

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my son, Jacob Adrian McDonough. Although he is only 8 months old at the time of this writing, he is discovering the world around him in ways that are very exciting for this first-time father. I hope that he and I can discover and explore this world together. I am proud to have him as my son.

Abstract

The present study explores the notion of the medieval warrior, his place in his world, his identity as a fighting man, and the literary means through which he is mediated and depicted in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and the Japanese war epic, *Heike Monogatari*. This work examines these two texts as they developed in feudal societies completely isolated from one another and considers how each played against and interpreted the role of the warrior in the contexts of the environments in which they were created.

The Introduction of this study approaches the question of feudalism and the parallels of the relationship between lord and vassal in both European and Japanese contexts. Chapter 2 focuses on Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, discusses the condition of the European medieval knight, the character of Yvain as a courtly knight, and the methods in which the protagonist is depicted by the author, specifically the use of irony. Chapter 3 examines the *Heike Monogatari* in detail as it defines the warrior code of the samurai through fictionalized historical characters. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes our study by drawing parallels and links between these two separate interpretations of the warrior and his limitations and also explores the implied qualities of the idealized warrior through both chivalry and *bushido*.

Acknowledgement

This thesis would not have been possible if it had not been for the unconditional love and support of my beautiful wife, Katharine McDonough. While I worked towards finishing this degree she gave up three years of her life to work in a rotten office with horrible buzzing fluorescent lights. This degree ought to have room for both of our names. Meeting her was the best thing that ever happened to me. She`s an angel.

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The summer grasses!
All that is left of the warrior's dream! –Basho

Introduction

There is an inexplicable and dominant quality in human nature which desires to know and understand the other, the thing which we are not. Women and men, in ideal situations, try to understand each other. Peoples of different cultures, religions, and politics, in open environments conducive to discussion, hopefully do the same. It would seem that there is something hard-wired in the human heart and mind which seeks to understand its own identity through attempting to understand what appears to be his opposite. Within the last century, there have been staggering technological changes which have made distant countries as close as mere hours away by airplane, seconds away by computer. This sense of immediacy has brought with it the ability of members of both East and West cultures to examine the other with intense scrutiny. Through newer methods of investigation we are able to have easy access to many different sources of information about other cultures, philosophies, and world views. The histories and lore of other countries and cultures are easily available to anyone. The profound differences and similarities ought to be more obvious to modern investigation than in any other time in human civilization. This thesis does not proclaim to be an authoritative voice in unraveling the differences between the East and West. What this text provides is an exploration into the commonalities and differences of warrior-identity revealed in two literary texts produced by two historical feudal

civilizations separated by thousands of kilometers, each oblivious of the existence of the other.

In exploring medieval themes in a comparative framework we need to legitimize the premises of our inquiry so that our conclusions are not based on arbitrary selection. Although there has been a tremendous amount of scholarship done on both the European knight and the Japanese samurai, there has been relatively very little comparative work done in the areas between them besides the passing nods of acknowledgement by authors who then tend to focus on either one or the other. This thesis focuses on two significant medieval texts as representative works of their respective cultures and feudal systems. They are Chrétien de Troyes' *The Knight of the Lion* and the Japanese war epic *Heike Monogatari*, otherwise known in English as the *Tale of the Heike*. This thesis is concerned with identifying the links and commonalities, as well as some of the differences between the European knight and the Japanese samurai by examining medieval texts which reflect each respective feudal civilization.

Before we can begin examining each text separately we ought to identify the problems which threaten our inquiry at the outset. This thesis addresses three topics of scholarship: European knighthood, the Japanese concept of bushido, and the commonalities and differences that are present between them. When we examine knighthood, we must avoid the traps of excessive romanticism and limit our discourse to what we know as plausible rather than expound upon areas which are more easily attributed to the wishful or fictional. The romances of Chrétien de Troyes are not quixotic or escapist. There is a distinct voice in the ambiguities of

the text and we need to listen carefully to hear it so that the narrator's voice is clearly heard amid the knightly scenes of valor and the clamor of battle. In order to do so, the differences between historical reality and aesthetic ideal must be dealt with carefully. With regards to our inquiries into *bushido* we must be aware of the dangerous political landmines of the past and also those which exist even today in many areas of current martial arts training and instruction. In Japanese society, *bushido* can be either considered an antiquated term or a word which is closely related to national identity and nationalism, manifesting itself in some extreme forms. To compound matters regarding *bushido* further, there is a dichotomy between certain pro-national elements who consider it to be a fixed moral code and the closer historical truth that *bushido* is a concept which changed and evolved over an extended period of time. This thesis will enlist the aid of supplementary texts in order to explore *bushido* as a concept more fully. Further, although the temptation to draw a connection between Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari* as straight-forward representations of medieval codes of knightly behavior is great, we must also examine carefully the manner in which each tale is told. A European representation of the knightly world is expressed in terms very alien to a Japanese interpretation.

This thesis will attempt to keep these problems carefully in mind. The arguments presented in this thesis are simple. Knighthood has been both a historical icon and, arguably, a historically necessary ideal. The idea of knighthood did not develop in a vacuum but from societal needs and pressures which conceptualized codes through which to govern the armed elements of

medieval society. Warrior identity is one which bound the vassal to his lord, and ideally, provided feudal lords with a police force to maintain an orderly society which protected peasants and farmers from predators who could otherwise exploit them. Organized armies of knights and samurai also provided feudal lords with fighting forces to utilize in conflicts against their enemies. Furthermore, warrior codes of conduct provide the nobility with ideals to live up to, goals to pursue in personal growth, and also exemplifies the qualities of loyalty, justice, and mercy.

Cultures from all over the world have, within their own societal constructs, expressions of the warrior figure. Within these expressions of the warrior also exist certain codes and patterned behaviors which are attributed to the fighting man. Huizinga, in his text *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, argues that chivalric codes are a global phenomenon:

> A conception of military life resembling that of medieval chivalry is found nearly everywhere, notably with the Hindus of the *Mahabharata* and in Japan. Warlike aristocracies need an ideal form of manly perfection. The aspiration to a pure and beautiful life, expressed in the *Kalokagathia* of the Hellenes, in the Middle Ages gives birth to chivalry. (40)

Warrior codes of conduct are an international phenomenon. North American native cultures, replete with wide varieties of initiation rites and rituals, make clear distinctions between boys and men, the warrior class and the rest of society. Feudal England, Germany, and France, have their own variations on the same theme. The same holds for Japan's feudal structures of samurai in its society as it is for European knights inasmuch as they are both distinguished from other classes in society. For the comparatist, the challenge is seeking out the legitimate

areas of commonality and distinguishing the different modes by which the shared foundation is expressed.

As we begin to consider these two texts, the term "epic" is often applied to the *Heike Monogatari*, a suggestion that it has the same sense of medieval tales based on epics that we would find in classic European texts, such as *The Song of Roland*, but this is an erroneous assumption. The *Heike Monogatari* is, for a Japanese readership, a foundational text in their own literature but it does not portray such epic heroes as we would find in a text like *The Song of Roland* where heroes exist largely as public examples to serve the common weal. Robert F. Cook, in his book *The Sense of the Song of Roland*, identifies this sense of public service as it relates to a feudal Christian perspective:

> The *Song of Roland* refers, then, not precisely to a code, but to a right understanding of civilized behavior in the feudal Christian matrix. That is clear from what happens to the central Christian characters . . . Personal honesty and truthfulness are themselves traditionally Christian ethical concerns. Here is where the strong link between personal and public morality characteristic of feudalism comes into play again, for the ethic of honesty in the *Song of Roland* is also a public and practical one . . . I think it is impossible to give an adequate account of what Roland says and does unless we perceive his behavior as coherent also, and as ethically consistent. (214)

Both Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari*, like European epics, serve the public but in a way which emphasizes over-all thematic qualities, rather than exemplary heroes. As we examine both texts closely, we will see that ethical matters are neither coherent or consistent. But before we investigate the various themes that permeate these texts, there are also historical parallels which exist between these two cultural representations of the warrior which ought to be noted.

Peter Duus, in *Feudalism*, identifies a strong commonality between medieval Japan and medieval Europe. He observes that a synchronicity exists between two geographically isolated cultural movements which, as products of parallel societal developments, have reacted to the imposed former order of Roman civilization and the profound influence of the Chinese empire, respectively:

> An examination of Japanese feudalism is not only interesting in itself; it also gives the historian a good opportunity to speculate on the origins and significance of feudalism in general. It is clear that the political institutions of feudal Japan and feudal Europe evolved independently of each other. Located thousands of miles apart across the Eurasian land mass, there was no possibility of direct influence between the two cultures. A comparison of the two is about as close to a laboratory experiment as the historian is ever likely to come. (11)

The era of feudalism is one that has been commonly misunderstood and open to wide and varied interpretations. Duus' complaint is to the point. In general "feudalism . . . in common parlance has come to signify something backward, arbitrary, and even irrational" (5). For contemporary Marxist historians, ". . . feudalism is equated with a manorial or seigneurial economic system and the power structure that grows out of it" (6). And for the Western powers of France, England, and the United States, feudalism is represented largely in economic terms: "They use it to describe a system of military and political organization in which armed warriors or knights rally to leaders who give them grants of land in return for personal service" (7). Duus' persuasive argument is that feudalism ought to be simply understood as a societal structure in which there is an absence of a strong centralized state, typical of agrarian societies. In sharp contrast to

many of his contemporary historians, Duus argues that far too much emphasis has been placed on the economic factors of feudalism in the relationship between the feudal lords and the peasantry. As a result, many of the military and political aspects of this system have been largely overlooked, especially in any comparative studies. The relationship between commoners and the nobles in terms of its symbiotic, rather than its potentially exploitive, nature is often neglected in Marxist interpretations. Western historians make the same error by emphasizing feudal knighthood as largely a mercenary service for payment in the form of gold or land. In either case, these interpretations focus primarily on the economic equation and in doing so neglect the human qualities of loyalty which truly drew the elements of feudalism together:

> Medieval society was prolific in creating forms of association to which entry was obtained by some form of oath. This connexion between freedom and individual acts of acceptance of its responsibilities again emphasizes the rational character of freedom. The serf's unhappy freedom from law was involuntary, but the submission of the knight, the baron, the clerk, the monk, the burgess, to their various codes of law was voluntary. The nobleman was bound by several codes of law—as a Christian, a baron, a knight, a subject of the king; and he could suffer all manner of penalties for a breach of any of these codes of law. Into all these obligations he had entered by an individual contract in the ceremonies of baptism, homage, knighthood and fealty. If he was punished, even by being burnt as a heretic, he could reflect that he was being punished for breach of contract. (Southern 110)

Both Southern and Duus argue that within what we call feudalism there exists an imperative relational quality which binds people together and which in turn gives the society a stability that would not otherwise exist. Breaking social contracts could prove to have devastating results but such consequences may have seemed necessary in order to preserve the delicate structures of medieval society.

The voluntary submission of individuality to the surrounding societal structures defined not only the limits to each person's actions but also the freedoms from the dangers of total isolation. Knighthood had its own particular codes within medieval society, and with it, particular benefits and compromises:

> The feudal lords of medieval Europe, as well as most of their followers and subordinates, were heavily armed, mounted fighting men. Together they constituted a kind of local aristocracy. The members of this warrior aristocracy were bound to one another by a peculiar set of social ties that gave them cohesion and established a rough order of prestige and authority among them. It was these ties that gave feudalism its essential character. The primary tie was that of vassalage, a personal bond of loyalty and obedience by which a warrior promised service to a lord or chieftain in return for military protection, security, and assistance. Unlike the ties of kinship or blood that characterize more primitive societies, vassalage was voluntary. (Duus 8)

Granted, in a Marxist interpretation, this aristocratic structure would continue to exist to ensure its own future continuance. Aristocratic structures would need to be overthrown in favor of a new societal structure, one based again on those who own and those who are employed, which then in turn again would continue in a cyclical manner until a proletariat reality would be fixed. Duus' problem with perceiving feudalism as a stage through which an eventual proletariat reality would be realized is that the very essence of the feudal state is a vacuum of a single central governmental authority against which a proletariat would rebel. Although feudal lords were not without power, the manifestation and use of that power is markedly different than bureaucratic governmental structures. The fighting man's relationship to his feudal lord is one based on individual volition. The samurai volunteers his support and is thus rewarded for his personal service.

The former central authoritative power which dictated the terms between aristocracy and peasantry no longer existed in a feudal world:

> At first glance, it seems difficult to find anything in the institutions of eleventh-century Japan that resemble those of northwestern Europe in the eighth or ninth centuries. The estate system was very different from the manorial system that had characterized land holding in Europe. . . . The aristocracy at Heian was far more elegant, far more sophisticated, and far more literate than the half-barbarian courts of the Franks, Germans, and the Anglo-Saxons; and doubtless the Japanese courtiers would have regarded the European aristocracy as crude and boorish. And finally, while the institutions of the Roman state existed as a patchwork of half-forgotten practices, partly absorbed by the rude monarchies of Europe and partly taken over by the church, the imperial institution and the elaborate structure of government offices inspired by T'ang China remained intact in Japan. Yet in certain important respects, the two cultures resembled one another: the effectiveness of centralized authority had undergone considerable decay, and the keeping of local order was gradually shifting into the hands of local fighting men. It was these two conditions that led to the gradual emergence of a feudal style of government. (33-34)

We can identify a plethora of superficial differences between Japan and the West, but they are merely variations on the same historical phenomenon. The Japanese medieval legacy of highly organized governmental structures with a myriad of seemingly arbitrary offices is contrasted with simpler forms of rule found in medieval Europe. These differences are simply different reactions to the same absence of centralized power that had been formerly wielded by the state. Closely examining feudal structures evolving in Japan, Scott Morton identifies the same growing vacuum during the Kamakura era that Duus notes:

> In this period the center of gravity in Japanese political power shifted from the emperor and his court nobles to the heads of warrior families; from the capital, Kyoto, to the country estates; and from those who held ancient, hereditary titles and ruled under the form of a civil administration of Chinese type to those clan leaders, old and new, who could carve out land and power for themselves by a sword and a strong right arm. In the conservative tradition of Japan all the old features remained—emperor,

> nobles, titles, and the ancient capital—but they gradually became increasingly empty symbols, for the authority lay elsewhere. (49)

In cataloguing the differences between Japanese and Western European feudalism we would certainly find the abundance of rank and title peculiar in feudal Japanese structures. Over time these titlements became little more than words which lacked their earlier meaning and political and psychological power. These titles were still considered to be some means of differentiation but, in the absence of a central authority, they had fewer benefits and less power than they once held.

The diminishing empowerment of titles, however, had little effect on the relationship the samurai had to his lord. Integrity in the relationship between lord and vassal was still of paramount significance. The internal qualities of the samurai--loyalty, fearlessness, a cultivated character, and resourcefulness—were non-negotiable:

> Whatever the position of the individual warrior in the band and whatever his relation to his leader, he placed a high value on the ideal of personal bravery and had nothing but contempt for those who showed cowardice. In the code of the warrior, a warrior should never turn his back on the enemy or attempt to escape. Even when he was outnumbered and defeat was certain, it was better to fight to the end. . . . To die with the sense of having fought valorously was far preferable than living with the knowledge of having been vanquished by fear. In part this outlook reflected a fatalistic view of life. Death was the natural fate of "those who wield the bow and arrow," and the warrior could not escape its inexorable advance. (Duus 40-41)

Fear, apprehension, negotiation, and capitulation were, consequently, unknown to the knight or the samurai. The only reality that the warrior need concern himself with is how he might behave as he faces the "inexorable advance" of death. The grimmer realities of battle, Duus argues, were not focal points in the world of the

warrior. Little is known of how these men felt about battle, as the texts omit much of the internal experiences of war:

> Warriors fought with gusto, steeped in an admiration for physical strength and a delight in violence. Early military romances rarely depict the carnage and destruction of battle, nor do they describe the bloodiness, confusion, and terror which at least a few of its participants must have felt. Rather, they celebrate fighting as a glorious and ennobling enterprise that gives men a chance to demonstrate their boldness, daring and gallantry. Their heroes are strong and fearless men, larger than life, who fight with exuberance, sublime confidence in their prowess, and scant regard for death. (Duus 41)

Although some may erroneously argue that feudal life was simple, it certainly appears to have certain clarity when it comes to the identity and purpose of the warrior. The knight or the samurai was the epitome of what a man could hope to be. The identity of men was best realized within these codes of loyalty and fearlessness. To the stoic warrior, death is the simple end to things that live, a death that is preferably realized in battle against the enemies of one's lord.

Duus' study keeps its focus on Japanese feudal structures rather than comparing them to those of Europe, a perspective which he begins to argue but does not follow deeper into aesthetic modes or social codes. Morton, however, ventures beyond Duus and discusses this relational quality as follows:

> The way of the warrior in Japan is sometimes linked, if only by implication, to the knightly code of honor in the medieval West. There are many genuine similarities, the paramount need for bravery and loyalty being the most important. These similarities arose, it seems, from the parallel social circumstances that produced in each case a feudal system in which land was held in return for military service to an overlord who granted protection to all in his domain. The circumstances were genuinely parallel in that a strong lord-vassal relationship was a necessity in both Japan and Europe as the only available barrier to the anarchy and chaos that threatened society after the breakdown of an earlier, stable order. In the West the breakdown was that of the Roman empire under pressure of

> the barbarian invasions, while in Japan it was the less spectacular but equally fatal breakdown of the T'ang government system borrowed from China. (63)

The feudal system by its nature is that of a vacuum in ruling power filled by various competing factions in medieval society which enlisted fighting men to fight their battles for them. This feudal order, specifically the aspect of the loyalty of vassal to lord, was the only alternative to social chaos. Although feudalism in both the East and West seemed destined to become obsolete, a powerful synergy once existed in the relationship that once existed between warrior and lord.

The warrior lived under circumstances which are hard for us to understand accurately and we must keep ourselves open to the idea that the representations we find of them in literature and history may be abstractions from the truth. Despite these obstacles in gathering an adequate understanding, we do have in the literatures which have been preserved images of the warrior, which are highly detailed. Chrétien's *Yvain* and the *Tale of the Heike* are two texts which have very evocative and detailed depictions of the medieval warrior, and each text grows in its awareness of how they present these images to their readers. The methods of mediation differ, the *Tale of the Heike* states its themes while Chrétien is more prone to play with his readers and hide meaning in context. The elevation of warrior virtues are the same: the true warrior fights to the death if necessary, is loyal and courageous, and is unyielding in the face of adversity. Upon further investigation into the creation of these ideals, the validity of their existence, and also the means by which they are transmitted, we find that much more exists under the surface. Chrétien's hero Yvain is a knight whose identity as hero is

subtlely questioned throughout the text. Yvain performs knightly duties and fights his enemies, but his conduct is questionable; a partial reward awaits his misconduct as he is driven to madness in the realization of his wrongdoing. Chrétien's exploration of knighthood are through the examples of King Arthur's greatest knights. Yvain and Gawain act as the lenses through which the virtues and vices of the knightly order are made plain. *The Tale of the Heike* is multifocal in other ways than Chrétien in that irony is not the primary vehicle which it uses to explore the proper conduct of the warrior class. This text is a fictionalized history which uses a variety of voices and experiences to demonstrate what the conduct of the samurai ought to be. Throughout this text, which depicts the destruction of the House of Taira, we are presented with the ways by which men live, serve, sacrifice, and defend their honor and households. We also are permitted unique views of how men fail in their honor, cheat, deceive, lie, and are shamed. These two texts run at remarkable parallels, existing in two completely separate geographic and social realities. It is to these similarities and differences that we direct our attention and it is these qualities that exist in the bedrock of each culture that we find the basis for our study.

Chrétien De Troyes' Yvain: Grey Knights

Deciding what can be considered a representational work of a particular author and age of thought can be a difficult enterprise. *The Song of Roland*, *La Morte D'Arthur*, and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* can all be considered representative works of medieval thought. Like *Yvain*, these works are lenses through which a medieval tale is told and a perspective into the mind of the author is granted to the reader. Regardless of which text we use to attempt to define what knighthood ought to be, we run into the same problem that each author is variously unable or unwilling to give the reader precise definitions. The association of knighthood with virtue is continually implied throughout the works of medieval authors, but, in its representation, irony is employed frequently in depictions of transgressions and deviations from knightly ideals. Nevertheless, the ideal itself often lacks definition. In the case of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, the poet never judges his hero. He never overtly condemns his hero when Yvain fails. *Yvain* is a meticulously constructed text which addresses, primarily through implication and juxtaposition, the central question of knightly identity. It is a stunningly flexible and innovative text:

> Despite its apparently lackadaisical attention to the strict conventions of romance narrative construction—no prologue, no sententia-like initial statement, no authority or source cited—*Le Chevalier au Lion* has often been described as Chrétien's most carefully contrived romance. In addition to what Frappier and others have referred to as its stylistic harmony and beauty of language, *Yvain* (along with *Cligés*) is Chrétien's most self-contained narrative. (Uitti 88)

Yvain is a carefully constructed tale. Not only is the linear manner in which the tale is told meticulously plotted, but Chrétien's treatment of Yvain as the knight who wins renown, falls from grace, and to some degree, finds acceptance is also highly developed and thoughtfully developed and presented. *Yvain*, like Chrétien's other romances is special in its singularity of focus on the protagonist and on the treatment the poet gives Yvain's rationale and motivations. Chrétien's careful focus on knighthood's conventions is complemented by his careful production of the text.

Before we explore how *Yvain* is a tale of chivalrous exploits and a romance from which chivalry as an ideal and concept is separated and examined, we ought to attempt to understand the basis from which medieval knighthood and chivalry were understood. We have previously discussed how such a structure such as chivalry grew out of a feudal necessity but this ideal, through which men ought to find their own identity, needs some clarification so as to ensure a common understanding. Jeremy DuQuesnay Adams, in his essay, "Modern Views of Mèdieval Chivalry," takes a panoramic view of one hundred years of scholarly research of chivalry. He gives the disclaimer of his argument as follows:

> Exploring the resonance of such terms involves a good deal more than mere definition, but some precision is necessary. When educated speakers of current English mention "chivalry" in a discussion of the European Middle Ages, it is safe to assume that they are referring to one or more of three connected phenomena: (A) the expert horsemanship of the military landed aristocracy and, by extension, its mode of making war; (B) the class which developed and was at least partly defined by that expertise and its consequences, cultural as well as political and economic; or (C) the codes of behavior developed by that class as self-definition, especially from the twelfth century onward. (43)

Cross-cultural understanding of chivalry, even that which exists in the same hemisphere, may differ. Referring to his own three-point method of defining chivalry, he continues:

> Comparison with the current French usage of chevalerie provides some perspective on modern American usage. The latest *Grand Dictionnaire Encyclopedique Larousse* (1982) gives a definition that corresponds neatly to our three chivalries, but Chevalerie B retains a prominence that its English counterpart has lost. This emphasis was even stronger in Georges Duby's 1968 article on chevalerie in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Although Duby grants that "a certain lifestyle and the ethic which is bound up in it do indeed constitute the essence of chivalry," he is clearly more interested in chevalerie as a 'category of feudal society.'" (43)

Adams, unlike Georges Duby, may be attempting to define chivalry outside of its feudal context. Adams' focus is primarily on chivalry as a "category" of thought, much more so than as a historical concept. His response to the scholarship on chivalry centers on ideas, rather than on the physical or historical manifestations of those ideas. Chivalry to some ought to be something grander, more transcendent. Regretfully, for many critics and authors any definition of chivalry appears too elusive or too limiting.

Although the debates which account for much of the currency in the marketplace of ideas have their own intrinsic value, Joachim Bumke also addresses both the grimmer reality of things and the ideal in his *The Concept of Knighthood of the Middle Ages*. In his exploration of the historical context of knightly identity, he writes:

> The aristocratic knighthood of which courtly poetry tells cannot be explained by shifting it into the social hierarchy. It is an educational and cultural idea of far-reaching significance and is a phenomenon of intellectual history rather than social history. The reality of the nobility around 1200 obviously looked quite different. We hear of political

> murders, and the feuds of the great men were conducted with treachery, extortion, robbery, and arson. In opposition to this crude reality the poets set up the chivalric ideal of virtue, the dream of the nobleman who incorporates humility into his nobility and therefore strives to satisfy at one and the same time the duties of the world and claims of God. (120)

Bumke's arguments are persuasive as he argues that there is a distinct dividing line between the idealized hope and the material existence of knighthood. The noble aristocracy was not as noble or genteel as one might imagine. The truth of the matter was that life was short and brutal, full of sickness, plague, and treachery (Huizinga 1-19). What was needed to elevate the thinking and, thus, hopefully, the actions of the nobles were tales of valor and adventure, of justice and love. The stark reality of court intrigue was not that of courtly game but of real life-and-death situations where one may need to be heartless and cruel to survive, let alone succeed and prosper. Knights could either be the brutish enforcers of the powers that were or they could be elevated to stand for moral codes of conduct and of virtues to which all men ought to strive to represent. It was indeed an era where virtuous conduct and temporal duty at times could be at loggerheads.

The meaning of the term "chivalry," of which authors such as Léon Gautier endeavor to provide the clearest meaning, has yet to be given a proper examination. Within the historical context of feudalism, an era of European history where different temporal forces compressed and expanded chivalry to have practical applications, our definitions are both simultaneously weakened and broadened. Maurice Keen begins his remarkable text on the subject of chivalry with this disclaimer:

> Chivalry is an evocative word, conjuring up images in the mind--of the knight fully armed, perhaps with the crusaders' red cross sewn upon his surcoat; of martial adventures in strange lands; of castles with tall towers and of the fair women who dwelt in them. It is also, for that very reason, a word elusive of definition. One can define within reasonably close limits what is meant by the word knight, the French chevalier: it denotes a man of aristocratic standing and probably of noble ancestry, who is capable, if called upon, of equipping himself with a war horse and the arms of a heavy cavalryman, and who has been through certain rituals that make him what he is--who has been 'dubbed' to knighthood. But chivalry, the abstraction from chevalier, is not so easily pinned down. It is a word that was used in the middle ages with different meanings and shades of meaning by different writers and in different contexts. Sometimes, especially in early texts, it means no more than a body of heavily armed horsemen, a collective of chevaliers. Sometimes chivalry is spoken of as an order of religion: sometimes it is spoken of as an estate, a social class-the warrior class whose martial function according to medieval writers, was to defend the *patria* and the Church. Sometimes it is used to encapsulate a code of values apposite to this order or estate. Chivalry cannot be divorced from the martial world of the mounted warrior: it cannot be divorced from aristocracy, because knights commonly were men of high lineage: and from the middle of the twelfth century on it very frequently carries ethical or religious overtones. But it remains a word elusive of definition, tonal rather than precise in its implications. (1-2)

So often, what we find in recorded histories of the life and practices of the knighthood are far different than what we see in the fictions generated at the same time. There is often a large difference in the idealized heroic figure and the mortal man who served his lord, both in war and peacetime, and who was subject to various societal pressures that were far out of his immediate control. The knight, in a feudal system, was not the knight errant of which we read in romance and legend. The knight was inextricably linked to the powers which created him, each with their own agenda for controlling and utilizing the medieval warrior. Knights were armed fighters defending their lord's interests and property. They were agents of the Church, deputized for the Church's goals in Crusades, as well as

enforcers for domestic concerns. The knights also had self-interests to pursue, namely, the competition with others of equal or near rank to win both land and title and to amass force enough to maintain it. What remains in an analysis of European chivalry are echoes of the ideal, resonances of directives for knightly conduct.

Raymond Rudorff writes extensively of the grim reality of the life of the knights. In his text, *The Knights and Their World*, we get an interesting perspective on the unglamorous life of medieval knights. For the most part, being a knight was a very precarious position to hold. As a young man the profession may seem to have had some potential, but, as one's physical power waned over time, the situation could become somewhat more complicated:

> The simple knights at the bottom of the scale had little or no political power. Their main purpose in life was to fight for their lord. If they were fortunate enough to hold a sub-fief by being granted a portion of some greater knight's lands, they might have a limited authority over a few local peasants and tenant farmers and live in a manor or country house with a rudimentary system of fortifications. . . . From the very beginning of medieval knighthood as a social institution, many impecunious knights were either roving adventurers or mercenaries who fought for pay. (79)

Rudorff further takes the shiny veneer off the knightly life with his fascinating discussion of what combat might have been like for the armed warrior. He states that for the most part, the armed combat of knights was far safer than fighters who fought as footsoldiers or pikemen:

> With their defensive armour, the knights were fairly safe against their equally armoured opponents' weapons. Unless they were unfortunate enough to be struck by a stone or arrow (for arrows were occasionally used despite the Church's prohibition) or stabbed, bludgeoned or hacked to pieces by the foot-soldiers in an ambush or scrimmage, the main dangers which a knight faced were of being severely bruised, knocked

> unconscious by a mace or sword blow, of having a bone or two broken or suffering some superficial cuts—although, of course, he might always be so unlucky as to be despatched out of this world by some lance or well-aimed sword thrust. (89)

When not "unluckily despatched" by an accidental lance skewering or freakishly lucky sword thrust, the knight could have a relatively long professional fighting life. Life as a mercenary-for-hire had benefits but it was not a lifestyle that could be sustained for a long period of time. There were still other avenues that an armed knight could pursue for profit, namely, the tournament.

Although the tournament provided the knight additional means to acquire wealth, there were still compromises for him to make. The violent acts we find in tournaments had little mortal threat to the knight and mentally distanced him from the reality of striking others with deadly weapons. The psychological distance that these men would take from death as they hacked at one another's armor with swords and maces instilled an artificial sense of invincibility. Armed conflict became a game and death an abstraction from the bloody battles of real warfare. Although Chrétien does not mention tournaments directly in his text, this is still the context against which his *Yvain* plays. Rudorff explains the tournament in terms of this abstraction from warfare, complete with its system of rewards and ransom:

> The knights errant of the period were far removed from the courtly Galahad figure of fairy stories and chivalric sagas of a later date. Far from being interested in riding through the world in search of honor and glory by rescuing distressed damsels, righting wrongs, helping the poor and weak and making solemn pilgrimages, the knights errant of the 12th and early 13th centuries mostly wanted to use their training and experience for two things only: to acquire greater prestige as fighters and to make their fortunes just like a prize fighter of modern times. (98)

The construction of the tournament was the arena in which knights could pursue their careers as professional fighters performing for public interest. In such contests the object of fighting was not to kill or maim the opponent but to unseat and disarm him so as to capture the fallen knight for ransom or reward. As a form of public entertainment, tournaments were widely popular.

Despite its public appeal, knightly involvement with tournaments brought with it sharp resistance from the Church. The Church saw the pursuit of name and fortune as being contrary to the kind of fidelity they required from their enforcers. The concerns of the Church may have been for the spiritual well being of the knight, but there may have been pragmatic elements to their resistance as well. A knight having won fortune through tourneying may be less inclined to race off to face Turkish aggressors inasmuch as he would have much more to lose in such an entanglement than one entirely devoted to Church directives:

> The Church was openly hostile to tournaments; it repeatedly prohibited them, and there is no doubt that the fear of the passionate character of this noble game, and of the abuses resulting from it, had a great share in this hostility. Moralists were not favourably disposed towards tournaments, neither were the humanists. Where do we read, Petrarch asks, that Cicero or Scipio jousted? The burghers thought them useless and ridiculous. Only the world of the nobility continued to cultivate all that regarded tournaments and jousts, as things of the highest importance. (Huizinga 71)

Huizinga shares, to some small degree, the distaste the Church and secular thinkers had of tournaments. Certainly, abuses of tournament fighting occurred, and motives for armed conflict in most cases degraded into a fight for money rather than more noble causes. Military leaders may have argued that tournaments were necessary to maintain the fighting prowess of knights and to encourage

young men to enter into a potentially dangerous career. Although Huizinga's perspective is one which comments on tournaments as they were in the late Middle Ages, his critical views on them are still relevant as a comment on the deterioration of knightly ideals having fallen to the level of gaming and sport:

> The warlike sports of the Middle Ages differ from Greek and modern athletics by being far less simple and natural. Pride, honor, love and art give additional stimulus to the competition itself. Overloaded with pomp and decoration, full of heroic fancy, they serve to express romantic needs too strong for mere literature to satisfy. (72)

"Mere literature" often could not feed the desire of the nobility to experience bloodshed and battle vicariously through the knighthood as they competed during tournaments. Participation as spectators provided the nobles with the opportunity to see battle in a safe and risk-free environment. Just as the knight was protected by his armor, the audience too was protected from the chaotic environment of real brutality, bloodshed, and death that would typically occur on a real battlefield.

To ensure the safety of all participants, weapons were blunted so as to not injure contestants much beyond bruises and small lacerations. But this blunting of weapons has more than just physical consequences for the knight. By making armed combat a game, a means of acquiring profit by capturing other knights and to do so without killing them to receive payment for their freedom, is to a wartime knight a strange aberration of what defines and justifies armed action. Profit, rather than virtue, as the motive for striking another man with a lance, sword, or mace is precisely the thing which distances the knight from the gravity of warmaking and makes the value of the knight little more than an entertainer or singer for the public to enjoy. The kind of knightly code we see at the tournament

and described in the pages of romances is far different than what we find in some of the more classical conceptions of man as knight and warrior:

> Chivalry as a moral code of knightly conduct hardly existed in the early period when the mounted warriors first reached their high social and military status. As they lived in such violent, lawless times of constant warfare, the early knights' code of values—as far as they can be said to have had one at all—was overwhelmingly a warlike one. To be brave on the battlefield, to die unflinchingly, sword in hand, to accomplish great feats of arms, and to be loyal to one's leader were the great virtues. Skill in arms and physical prowess made the ideal warrior. As the feudal system developed and the question of the relationship between lords and their vassals became one of primary importance in a society geared for war, the notion of a warrior's fidelity to his leader and his readiness to sacrifice himself out of a loyalty assumed even greater importance. (Rudorff 106)

The moral absence in knightly conduct of the tournament knight is in stark contrast to the simplified warrior ethic of the wartime knight. In order to develop and maintain an armed force of fighting men the relationship between liege lord and knight was critical. This relationship required simplicity but within the ceremonial aspects of knight-making a growing complexity occurred. Historians can easily trace a growing development in knightly codes through explorations of the radical changes in things such as dubbing ceremonies between early and later middle ages. Initially, the simplicity of clapping the new knight on the shoulder was enough to bring him into the ranks of chevaliers just as the simplicity of understanding loyalty to his lord would maintain him in his new social position. Over time, the initiations into knighthood developed ostensibly and the ceremonial aspects of knighthood grew in elaborate complexity, as did some of the relational qualities the knight would have with his lord, his lady, and the society around him.

In exploring the complexity of the knight's relationships with the world around him there are many questions which arise especially when both literature and history are relied upon to mediate them. Tony Hunt's critical work *Yvain* cuts right to the central issue of how the identity of the knight was best understood in an historical context yet questions the identity of the warrior just as Chrétien does in his romances. Is the knight simply an armed soldier in the employ of his lord? Is he a lover? Is he a temporal strong-armed enforcer of Christ? Of the medieval context in which the knight evolved and grew and the necessities to civilize him Hunt writes:

> In reality, we know, knightly *adventure* was military *adventurism*, chivalry was too often uncoordinated violence, destructive of friendships, families, and, in a still largely agrarian economy, of prosperity. Internecine squabbles, personal rivalry, the wholesale laying waste of others' lands, the primary role of looting and rapine in almost all military activity led to a social unease which the Church attempted to control through the peace movements and crusades and which lay authorities might hope to mitigate by 'socializing' knighthood through an association with women, refinement of manners, and moral justice—*les hommes font les lois, les femmes font les moeurs.* (12)

And of the knight's directions from the Church we are informed:

> The attempt to convert chivalric ambitions from material profit to spiritual salvation was continued by St Bernard in his *De laude novae militiae*, written soon after 1130 for the Templars under their master Hugh of Payns. Here he listed as common motives of fighting the impulse of thoughtless anger, the appetite of vainglory, and cupidity for worldly possessions. The 'new' soldiers will bear armaments, not ornaments, their minds will be on the fight, not on display, on victory, not glory, they will inspire fear, not admiration, and will substitute prudence, self-control and cool deliberation for violence, impetuosity and recklessness. The result, says Bernard, will be *militia* (soldiering) instead of *malitia* (malice)—the word-play becomes a leitmotiv throughout the rest of the century . . .The opposition militia—malitia constantly reappears. The knight is bound by election and oath to serve justice (*aequitas*) and the common weal (*publica utilitas*), to protect the Church, combat evil, respect the clergie,

> defend the poor, keep the peace, and to shed his own blood (even lay down his life, if need be) for the good of his fellows. The privileges accorded to knights enjoin on them discipline and loyalty. They must abjure greed, vainglory, intemperance and selfishness. (37-38)

The Church's need for civilizing reckless and deadly knightly behavior was of paramount importance. With no truly powerful central authority to punish reckless knights intrinsic codes for chivalrous conduct were developed out of social necessity. Avarice, Greed, and Pride were the spiritual cancers of the knight and to these mortal threats the Church provided the code of cures.

It is safe to assert that scholars investigating the fundamental beliefs of the medieval mind tend to agree that cowardice, weakness, and sloth are all qualities which have been considered unchivalrous and unknightly. The subject of chivalry, namely the knight who opts to act under the banner of chivalry, is strong and courageous, actively pursues his goals, faces challenges, and does so without hesitancy or reserve. Maurice Keen provides us with an adequate definition which serves both sacred and secular thinkers alike:

> From a very early stage we find the romantic authors habitually associating together certain qualities which they clearly regarded as the classic virtues of good knighthood: *prowess*, *loyauté*, *largesse* (generosity), *courtoisie*, and *franchise* (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth with virtue). The association of these qualities in chivalry is already established in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (written c. 1165—c. 1185), and from his time on to the end of the middle ages their combination remains the stereotype of chivalrous distinction. (2)

Keen attributes the definitive voice of chivalry as having strong roots in Chrétien's romances (109). Joachim Bumke also identifies Chrétien de Troyes as an authority on the usage of chivalry as a courtly ideal:

> In any case the word "chevalier" had a more elevated meaning from the very beginning in the double sense of "l'aptitude au combat et la naissance noble" (fitness for battle and noble birth). In the older chansons de geste it is still inferior as a term for a hero to bear; in the works of Chrétien de Troyes it has become the central concept of the courtly world. (77)

Chrétien de Troyes' primary focus on chivalry as a central tenet of knighthood addresses, but does not definitively explain, what the knight's identity and purpose are. What we are left with then is to make a kind of general statement about how knighthood is identified solely with positive qualities and virtues to which man ought to aspire. Courage, loyalty, and generosity exist because of good birth and position within the nobility. Chrétien in his romances plays upon the duality of societal position and inner goodness and plays not only with knightly definition and virtues, but knightly shortcomings as well.

Chrétien begins his *The Knight of the Lion* in a setting of knightly camaraderie, feasting and tale-telling. The scene is set and the players are ready to do as Chrétien would have them. But before they act, the author has this to say about the lofty purposes to which true knights claim to have pledged themselves:

> Some knights talked of recent events; others were speaking of love, the tribulations and the sorrows and the blessings that often come to the disciples of his order. At that time Love's order was still fine and flourishing. Now, alas, there are very few disciples; nearly all have deserted him so that Love is held in disrepute. In olden days Love's disciples were known for courtesy and bravery, generosity and honor. Now *love* has become an idle word. Those who know nothing of his order maintain they love, but they lie. They have no right to talk. In their boasting, love is but an idle tale and a lie. (257)

Referring back nostalgically to ancient times when love was not an idle word, when knights who spoke of love truly knew of what they spoke and did not boast, Chrétien sets up devotion to love and truthfulness as two virtues towards which

the present knight, to whom the tale is addressed, must apply himself. Of late, we read, love has fallen out of its usual sacred place and is largely unknown by braggarts who misunderstand and misrepresent its truest meanings.

The story of *Yvain* is a furious exploit of Yvain the knight, who after hearing of the humiliating disgrace of his cousin Calogrenant, swears to avenge the wrongs received and to pursue the adventure of the storm fountain. Yvain soon meets Esclados the Red, the knight who guards the magical fountain which, when affected by human meddling, summons violent storms. Naturally, Esclados the Red is quite perturbed when anyone uses the fountain for his own amusement and is not pleased to find Yvain performing the same acts which Calogrenant had several years prior. The two knights battle, Esclados is mortally wounded, and Yvain pursues him inside the castle where he is evaded by his opponent. Esclados dies, the castle laments the loss of its champion, and Yvain falls in love at first sight of the grieving widow. After some careful negotiating through the widow Laudine's maidservant Lunette, Yvain wins the hand of Laudine and becomes the new defender of the fountain. Arthur and his company come on the scene to test the wonders of the magical fountain, and Yvain appears as its protector after unseating Kay in a joust, thus having his personal revenge on him for previous insults which he had received. Yvain is, within a week after his wedding to Laudine, persuaded by Gawain to accompany him in tournaments to acquire a reputation. Yvain promises his new bride that he will return within a year, and Laudine gives him a magic ring which would protect him from imprisonment, thereby implying that the only thing which would keep Yvain away beyond the

time limit would be a breach of his sworn word. A year and then some slips past and Yvain, sitting with Arthur and his knights, is rebuked by a female emissary of Laudine who retrieves her lady's ring from him. Yvain goes mad in a sudden awareness of his moral crime against his wife. What follows is Yvain's recovery from insanity and a series of generous and noble acts which permit him the opportunity to recover his lost status as knight and true lover. In the end, Lunete assists once again in the careful negotiations of reunion, and the story concludes by informing us that Yvain and Laudine are united once again—although in what context we are unsure—and remained as one from that day onwards.

Chrétien begins his tale of *Yvain* with a statement that love had recently become a lie in the mouths of knights who claim to know of what they speak. Love, in the days long past, was well known for what it truly was. What we have in *Yvain*, in contrast to other medieval texts, including Chrétien's own, is the central protagonist realizing his misdeed and betrayal of his promise. There is no doubt in anyone's mind, Yvain included, that he has behaved poorly.

The ideal of chivalry is not easily attainable and we read in Chrétien's tale of how our hero almost immediately fails in keeping his sworn word. The knight stops being knightly when he serves himself instead of his lady. We may argue that Yvain's situation is unique and that he may have been unaware of the commitment one must give to one's spouse. We may argue that it is the knight's duty, as Gawain so persistently and persuasively rebuffs and cajoles Yvain, to go to tournaments and seek a proper reputation which is worthy of a lady's love. Gawain argues to Yvain that it is the knight's duty to maintain his name and

reputation as a great warrior so that his household may not fall into disgrace. Gawain, as Yvain's kinsman and friend upbraids his comrade with admonishments:

> "What?" Sir Gawain asked. "Will you be like those men who are less worthy because of their wives? Holy Mary damn the man who marries and regresses! When a man has a beautiful lady as his beloved or his wife, he should lead a better life. It is not right for her to love him after his honor and his renown cease. Certainly you would be angry too if you grew soft from her love. A woman quickly withdraws her love—and has every right to do so—and despises the man, in the realm where he is lord, who regresses because of her. Now more than ever your renown should increase. Break loose from the bridle and the halter, and we shall go to tournaments, you and I, so that people will not call you jealous. (286-7)

Gawain argues that the knight's value is only that which others say about him. To become soft and complacent, something which husbands are argued to do with some frequency, is to become undeserving of a lady's love. In this sense a wife is both a blessing and a curse. From the knight's wife never-ending love may be received but with it comes an enchantress's spell which threatens to take away the man's edge, his ability and desire to fight for his name and fortune. As readers we are divided between our empathy with Yvain's knightly duties and his responsibility to his sworn word to his life-mate. The question of knightly duty existing in the contexts of marriage is perplexing. Duby's arguments on the subject of the compatibility of knighthood and marriage are also persuasive. The knight, also often referred to as a "youth", was by his very nature not one to settle down easily into marriage. The youth was required, sometimes due to the complexities of marrying into the right family in order to preserve political alliances, to travel and to seek adventure (113-19). These same conventions may

be the very thing that Chrétien is playing against as he presents to his readers the married knight, perhaps an unusual hero in chivalric romance. Nevertheless, Yvain bound himself in marriage to Laudine and when promises are broken there are inevitable consequences that need to be addressed.

Jean Frappier, the venerated critic of Chrétien de Troyes, sees a split in the Yvain tale in that "disgrace and folly" follow the second half of this romance which in itself seems to be able to stand independent of the complete text. Frappier suggests what many critics do concerning Yvain, arguing that the hero's true fall from grace happens only after he breaks his word to Laudine:

> While the first part of the romance forms a unified whole, the rest is somewhat diffuse, less rigorous in arrangement, though with his *conjointure* Chrétien has still accomplished a fine gradation of adventures. After the year of purposeless and selfish tourneying with Gawain, there follows a period of disgrace and folly—a psychological and moral watershed. Yet from this low ebb in his fortunes, Yvain rises through a series of generous and selfless acts, becoming a hero of useful prowess in the service of the weak and oppressed. Accompanied by his regal ally, the model of loyalty must also perform his penance and undergo a supreme test (in combat with Gawain) to demonstrate his prowess and magnanimity. Once he is rehabilitated in his own eyes and judges himself worthy of pardon, he willfully precipitates the conclusion. (115)

The generous language of Frappier in regards to Yvain's behavior bears consideration. Frappier glosses over Yvain's lack of proper courtly conduct as a knight. The critic also fails to mention Yvain's unwarranted aggression against Esclados the Red, the man who was the proper defender of the storm fountain or of Esclados' family and subjects who were subjected to unprovoked attack from a man whose only reason for doing so was to increase his own name. As far as Yvain's penance is concerned and the judgement exercised to determine whether

or not proper punishment has been served, the guilty subject is his own judge of character; and instead of humbly giving himself over to the mercies of his betrayed lady, he participates in a clever ploy to hold her to her word and to force her to adhere to Christian principles to which Yvain has been largely exempt.

The woman who retrieves the magic ring from Yvain, suggested in some interpretations to be Lunete, may have been correct because Chrétien gives us a powerful scene in which our jousting knight is finally confronted for his crimes against his lady and against love:

> She announced that her lady sent greetings to the king, to Sir Gawain, and to all the others except Yvain, the liar, the hypocrite, the disloyal traitor, who had tricked and deceived her. "Well has she recognized the treachery of this man, who purported to be a true lover but was a fool, a deceitful scoundrel. This thief has betrayed his lady, who had no experience of baseness, and never imagined that he was about to steal her heart. (289)

Frappier's analysis of the portion of what he calls the "diffused" half of the tale may be overly generous when we examine this speech in terms of Chrétien's opening lines about how those who boast recently to know love speak only in empty words and lies. Laudine's emissary is not contradicted in any manner, so we may draw the conclusion that love's traitor can only be Yvain himself. Yvain's excuse for being so forgetful of his purported true love is as legitimate as his claim to begin his adventures on behalf of Calogrenant whose humiliation needed a champion to exact proper and just vengeance. Frappier neglects to see Yvain in such a manner which would display the hero not as a chivalrous and courteous knight but in the hues in which he is described in this passage and to

which the knight has no verbal defense. Frappier simply neglects to witness any form of knightly weakness in Yvain.

In examining Yvain as the chivalric ideal of generosity, compassion, good manners, mercy, and fearlessness we quickly discover that the presentation of Yvain as a noble warrior is problematic. Yvain begins his adventures under the pretense of defending his cousin Calogrenant's defeat at the hands of the fountain knight but in essence he is defending his kinsman's former wrongful tampering with the fountain and champions his own individual desire to seek adventure and reputation. Having faced the fountain knight on his own terms, Yvain mercilessly butchers the defender of the castle and then pursues him for the sake of retrieving a trophy from him as proof to the other knights of the Round Table who would not believe him otherwise (Bloch 196-7). Once inside the castle, Yvain does not face his foes without fear but instead hides under a bed undiscovered with the aid of a magic ring which keeps him invisible. After witnessing the sorrowful lamentations of the widow of the murdered knight, Yvain falls in love with the sight of a new prize to pursue and then begins a negotiation carefully orchestrated by Lunette, the-widow-Laudine's attendant, to win the lady of the castle's hand in marriage. Having accomplished the goal of subduing the knight of the fountain, and then taking his wife as his bride, Yvain makes promises and then quickly and unthinkingly breaks them to his new wife Laudine. When she rejects him for his lack of true devotion to their marriage, he resorts to forms of physical and psychological extortion to win her a second time.

Yvain's acts are morally questionable, to say the least. In one respect we can say that the Yvain of the first half of the text is not knightly in any regard and that his actions are borderline socio-pathological. Yvain's shortcomings are not only noticeable in a contemporary examination but also in a medieval one. E.K. Milliken writes of how knights were to go about their business:

> A knight was expected to adopt a brother-in-arms in a friendship based on mutual esteem and companionship which bound him for life by ties more strict than blood itself. This pact was made when two knights vowed faith and love to each other, wore the same arms and clothes, mingled their blood in one vessel, received the sacrament and kissed the pax (a tablet with a representation of the Crucifixion on it) together. Brotherhood-in-arms overrode all duties except those which were owed to the king; all perils should be met together 'for weal or woe', all adventures undertaken in company, all the advantages of a happy enterprise were to be shared, as was also both loss and misfortune. (30-31)

Curiously, Yvain has no brother-in-arms when he faces Esclados the Red. Instead of waiting for Arthur, who expressed an explicit desire to see the magical fountain for himself, Yvain sneaks away at night, not taking leave from his lord, in order to beat everyone to the fountain to seek individual adventure. There is no sense of community or camaraderie in Yvain's decision-making. Although it is the nature of the knight-errant to act independently of his brothers-in-arms, Chrétien's choice of Yvain acting alone and in direct conflict with his lord's wishes begs the question of whether or not the knight is meant to be a solitary figure in seeking adventure. Tony Hunt also argues this point in his criticism of Yvain's conduct in battle:

> An incipient egocentricity in Yvain is rapidly reinforced by the combat with the fountain knight. Again, despite his foreknowledge, no challenge is issued and the two knights fight without a word being exchanged. At first chivalric decorum is observed: neither combatant seeks to injure the

> other's horse and thereby secure combat on foot. The narrator comments favourably on this honourable course (11.855ff), as if to prepare the contrast with what follows. Yvain deals his opponent such a blow that his mail is stained with blood and brain. That the wound is very obviously a mortal one is explained not only by the fountain knight's flight, but also by the narrator's comment that he was right to flee ('n'ot mie tort', 1.873). This is not cowardice therefore. Just when we recall the words of Turnus to Aeneas (Aen. 12, 938) 'Let not your enmity go any further,' we are presented with Yvain's ruthless pursuit of a dying man. This is problematic on more than one count. (43)

Yvain lets his "enmity go further" on many levels. He shows his foe no compassion or mercy but pursues him to the death and seeks a trophy from the dead man's corpse. Yvain's pursuit of Esclados past the portcullis results in both the loss of the hindquarters of his horse and his own spurs. The attachment of spurs to a newly dubbed knight in the dubbing ceremony and Yvain's loss of his own is highly suggestive of Yvain's fall from knighthood. As Laudine bewails the loss of her husband, her first impression of Yvain bears mention as Yvain hides under a bed while the town searches for him:

> Because I don't see him, I can declare that some phantom or evil spirit has come among us. And so I am the victim of a magic spell. Or else he is a coward and afraid of me. And what cowardice on his part not to dare appear before me. Ah, phantom, cowardly thing, why are you frightened of me when you were bold before my lord? Why don't I have you in my power now? Has your strength gone already? Why can I not get hold of you now? How could it happen that you killed my lord, unless by treachery? (271)

The magical ring which Yvain's receives from Lunette, keeps him invisible and is the only thing preventing him from being exposed to Laudine and the townsfolk as Esclados the Red's assassin. It is remarkable to note that Yvain is capable of hearing these words of Laudine and does nothing to speak up for his own name

and to state simply that he is not a coward and fears no one. Instead, Yvain lies under the bed and pines for the love of Laudine, smitten by the powers of Love.

Yvain's adventure turns out for the best. Lunette who had saved him thus far, assists him in wooing Laudine, the recent widow. What ensues is not so much a typical courtly episode but a rationalization of Laudine, through Lunette's assistance, that the castle needs a champion and that she might as well marry the strongest man around, even if it is her own husband's murderer. This relationship is compounded by the Oedipal implications of the warrior marrying the wife of the man he murdered. Yvain usurps the role of protector of the castle when he kills Esclados the Red. He takes his victim's wife as his own and assumes the throne. Unlike Oedipus and Jocasta, however, Yvain and Laudine marry in full knowledge of the murder. Laudine's lamentations for her dead husband cease when she has secured a new champion for the magic fountain. With such a reading, the relationship of Yvain and Laudine escapes any idealized meeting and union of medieval lovers. With such mitigating circumstances forming this union at the outset, it may make it easier for the reader to grant Yvain a generous reading for his failure in keeping his sworn word to Laudine.

The marriage of Yvain and Laudine is a largely contractual one. At first Yvain is love-struck by the sight of Laudine. He desires frantically to prevent her hands from pulling and scratching at herself as she grieves over her husband's corpse. Having achieved the prize of Laudine, however, a distinct shift in their relationship takes place. Yvain negotiates a year-long leave and while bidding farewell attempts to find conditions that may prevent him, or perhaps allow him,

from keeping his word. Having later developed a reputation not as "Yvain" but as "The Knight of the Lion," Yvain traps Laudine and forces her to forgive him, again with the intercession of Lunette. Laudine's oath-taking in contrast to Yvain pledging his own word to her is striking:

> "You have now trapped me neatly. In spite of myself you will make me love a man who does not love or esteem me. You have done very well for yourself. And what fine service you have done me! I would prefer to endure winds and storms all my life. If it were not too shameful and too base to break an oath, he would never find pardon or peace from me at any cost. Every day I would have brooded in my heart, like fire smoldering under ashes. But now I do not wish to hear mention of this pain, nor do I care to recall it, since I have to be reconciled to him." (337)

From this bizarre twist of legalities Jean Frappier construes harmony. He argues that

> Chrétien's great genius here interrelates the themes of love and of chivalry, thus achieving a unified *sen* in the romance: the lover's guilt was indeed atoned for by knightly feats. Yvain's chivalric ascension accords then with the courtly ethic, which meant that love's dignity was based on the worth of the beloved: Laudine had the right to condemn Yvain; it was her duty to pardon "The Knight with the Lion." Love's torments thus rehabilitated Yvain by advancing him from egoistic prowess to a higher chivalric notion, to the consciousness of a mission. He becomes the perfect knight of law, of pity, and of charity, as the companionship of the lion attests. (125)

Other critics, such as Tony Hunt, concur with Frappier that a rehabilitation has taken place in Yvain and that he is a changed man. The text certainly supports this assertion. Since Yvain's recovery from madness, he performs selfless acts such as saving the lion from the serpent, he defeats a number of superhuman foes in the name of justice, and he rescues the defenseless and protects the weak. He is, indeed, a changed man.

Despite the *sen* that we can find in *Yvain*, we still need to ask why Chrétien de Troyes presents us with two seemingly incompatible depictions of the ideal knight. Why is Yvain presented as a liar and a hypocrite, as well as a hero and a courtly knight? Throughout *Yvain*, Chrétien never critically addresses the faults and flaws of his characters. Although Chrétien frames the romance by asserting that Love has fallen in disrepute and that those who profess to know about it are liars and miscreants, he never says that what Yvain does is immoral, cowardly, conniving, and under-handed. Chrétien begins by stating the belief and fact that virtue is important and that of late it has been neglected due to selfishness and self-delusion by some unnamed individuals who ought to pay attention to what is being said. Chrétien then tells us a splendid story about a knight who is seeking adventure and going about his own business as it is that particular character's nature to do. What is extremely curious is that the preamble is addressed to no particular knight. It could, in essence, be a statement about Calogrenant's dealing with defeat in contrast to Yvain. Perhaps it is a statement about compounded folly in Yvain seeking revenge for justice served against Calegrenant's wrongdoing. There are conflicts and oaths, falls from grace and then redemptive acts, and what is right and true and good is not always immediately clear. Some things need some thought and some careful consideration. There is much ambivalence about good and evil and times when the hero justifies the means in order to achieve virtuous ends. In a curious passage, during the battle between Yvain and Gawain, Chrétien adds another layer of ambivalence:

> I swear it is a proven wonder that Love and mortal Hate are found together. God, how can two such contraries inhabit the same house? It seems to me they cannot live together in one house a single night, for once each knew the other was there, they could remain only with dispute and discord. Yet in one house are several divisions with galleries and bedrooms. It may be the same in this situation. Perhaps Love had shut himself in some hidden chamber, while Hate had gone to the galleries on the street side to be seen. (329)

What ought to be a simple contest to determine which side God fights for as two champions represent the inheritance claims of two sisters turns out to be a battle in between the qualities of Love and Hate. But in this case it is Hate that has come out into the open to be seen in a heated display of armed combat between two heroes and comrades who have shut up Love "in some hidden chamber." The entire matter is further compounded in complexity as Gawain immediately dedicates himself to champion one sister over the other without verifying whether or not he is defending a wrongful cause.

What these knights truly represent in Chrétien's world is not clear. He claims they are heroic, good, generous, brave, and noble. The critics often agree. Yvain and Gawain are the best of what manhood has to offer. These two are the strongest and most stalwart, kind, and virtuous beyond the understanding and comprehension of normal men. The battle that takes place between Gawain and Yvain, however, is a bewildering encounter as Gawain champions the obviously groundless seizure of an inheritance while Yvain fights for the victim of the crime. To make matters even more unclear, although Gawain champions an unjust cause, the two knights fight to a standstill, showing their skills as knights to be on a par. Despite this muddled ambiguity of knighthood and the championing of

causes in a reality where good ought to always overcome evil, Joachim Bumke addresses some of these questions of the determinative in knighthood when he says:

> From the very beginning there was a poetic element in the noble concept of knighthood, to the degree that there is poetry in every metaphorical use of a word. Whenever the title "knight" broke out of its old limitations, it at once lost its character as a bald piece of objective description and became a metaphor. (78)

What exactly Yvain becomes a metaphor for is an arguable point and perhaps it is to this point that Chrétien addresses his tale. In the first half of the text, Yvain's character, defined primarily by his knightly station, comes into question when he acts out of self-interest rather than in the service of others. When the knight fails in his duties and thus identity, he ceases to be what he supposed to be, the metaphor for perfect conduct and virtue. Perhaps it is for this reason that Yvain is described as going mad and becoming a savage. Because he fails to be the exemplar of knighthood, he must exchange it for another, that of the wildman. It is not until he changes from his egocentric path to that which shows mercy and compassion, keeps promises, and champions the wronged that he can recover from the madness which possesses him.

Adams proposes another possibility of what it is we ought to be looking for when we talk about chivalry and knightly ideals. He departs from Bumke in that instead of taking the term "knight" as an assumed set of rules and principles of conduct, he splits it down the middle and divides it between ethics and aesthetics:

> The conception of chivalry as a sublime form of secular life might be defined as an aesthetic ideal assuming the appearance of an ethical ideal. Heroic fancy and romantic sentiment form its basis. But medieval thought did not permit ideal forms of noble life, independent of religion. For this reason piety and virtue have to be the essence of a knight's life. Chivalry, however, will always fall short of this ethical function. Its earthly origin draws it down. For the source of the chivalrous idea is pride aspiring to beauty, and formalized pride gives rise to a conception of honor, which is the pole of noble life. (42)

This argument is persuasive in that it takes the medieval text and makes Yvain equally accessible to both the moral and the aesthetic. Yvain, in his folly and foolishness becomes more accessible to mortal man in that he is neither saint nor angel. The tale, read by those of a more theological mindset find solace in Yvain's acts of penance and of piety to God, Church, and his sworn word. Aesthetically, Yvain has both transcendent and tragic qualities. Our hero loses himself in the forests of the wildman but then emerges again, healed and made whole. What it is exactly that Yvain learns in the text is never truly revealed to us as readers, and it is in this zone where the readers have a broader range of independent interpretation. The intention of Chrétien in this matter is not clear by any means, and it is this sense of indeterminacy which makes him universally accessible.

Authorial intent on the part of the poet is a subject of never ending speculation. Peter Haidu in his book, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes*, argues that it is the detachment the author displays which permits him to make ethical judgements in a manner mediated through pleasure. In excusing himself from a direct confrontation in the form of rhetorical argument, Chrétien takes a moral distance, thus granting the reader "moral and aesthetic freedom" (69). To Haidu's statements, Bloch adds:

> On the surface, the notion of esthetic mediation seems to differ qualitatively from its mimetic equivalent since it implies an act of deflection toward pleasurable substitutes for action instead of imitation. In fact, they amount to the same, except that the esthetic conception focuses upon an identification which occurs at a secondary stage in the mediatory process. Those who conceive of mediation as esthetic in nature tend to stress the act of self-consciousness preceding adoption of an appropriate course of action. (195)

Bloch does not argue that Chrétien avoids moral questions or is not concerned with ethical questions. What we bear witness to in Chrétien's mediations is a lack of direct mimetic strategies, as well as ethical intervention. The purposes for aesthetic mediation in such a way serve multiple ends. Aesthetic, or distancing, mediation grants the poet license to speak and present his characters and ideas without fear of immediate reprisal. Almost shrouded in "pleasure," the poet absolves himself of rhetorical arguments and may speak uninterrupted.

Because he retreats from any sort of direct confrontation, the poet can escape some of the more politically charged motivations of state and church inquiries into the state of man's place in society and God's kingdom. Chrétien de Troyes, as far as we can tell, was able to negotiate the troubled waters of both court politics and church theology, and his audience grew beyond the constraints of the medieval court. Chrétien's universality and accessibility extends beyond theological understandings of sin and redemption. *Yvain* is a tale drawn out of a wealth of mythology and lore. Barber cites *Yvain*'s sources fairly and identifies the story's roots:

> Chrétien plunders every mythology to hand, pagan, Christian, Celtic, to embellish his story; the easily consoled widow may be Jocasta, the tame and devoted lion belongs to Androcles, and the fountain comes from Breton lore. And beyond this, he draws his characters in bold strokes:

> Yvain, generous, noble, impulsive; Laudine, haughty, clever, yet truly loving; and Lunete (her confidante) shrewd and devoted. Only once does he fail to convince us that he knows exactly how their minds work, and that is in Yvain's desertion of Laudine after a mere fortnight of marriage, and his forgetfulness. Chrétien merely says 'as the year passed by my lord Yvain had such success that my lord Gawain strove to honor him and caused him to delay so long that the whole year slipped by.' Though this is the hinge on which his plot turns, it demands no greater suspension of disbelief than the marvels which precede and follow it. (109)

Barber writes as many critics do, with a sense of awe and wonder of Chrétien, a respect for the man and poet as a formative and definitive voice of the origins and nature of medieval chivalry and romance. His assertion that Chrétien's world and poetry are products of a heightened awareness of legend, mythology, story, and history is evocative. We find resonance of several thematic levels in Chrétien's work and treated with a tone of sophistication and comprehension. The interwoven subtleties of Yvain as Oedipal figure or as Androclean hero enhances the meanings of the text.

Karl D. Uitti traces the origins of Chrétien's *Yvain* to more specific Celtic sources, claiming that the tale is one designed for a more specific audience:

> It seems probable that, like that of *Erec et Enide*, the *matiere* of *Yvain* also derives ultimately from a Celtic adventure tale more or less resembling those to be found in the Welsh *mabinogion*. Indeed, among the surviving *mabinogion* one finds a story entitled *Owein and Lunet* in which, along with other elements appearing in Yvain, one comes across a marvelous fountain quite similar to the Magic Fountain of Barenton. A Celtic mythological substratum clearly informs Chrétien's romance: Laudine and Lunete possess a fairylike nature; water poured on the Magic Fountain's stone slab causing the terrible storm is doubtless a reference to certain Celtic rain myths; Esclados-le-Roux has been assimilated to the priest-king Nemi, who personifies the oak god, protector of fecundidty and of harvests, and who is destined to be replaced by the hero who succeeds in killing him; the magic ring given to Yvain by Lunete, as well as the miraculous unguent that cures him of his madness, have Celtic analogues; the Chateau de Pesme Aventure would appear to be located, like Tristan's

> "house of glass," in the Celtic Other World. The analogies are numerous and convincing. Besides, Yvain himself is named in both Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthurian *Historia* and Wace's *Brut*, works that deal largely with "historically" Celtic matters. (79)

Uitti's claim that *Yvain* is a text intricately linked to a specific historical context is also persuasive. It seems extremely likely that Chrétien has specific sources to draw from in writing *Yvain*. It also is extremely likely that Chrétien also had a specific audience in mind as well. In his essay, "Le Chevalier au Lion," Uitti pursues his belief in the identifiable reader when he asserts that Yvain is a text designed to undermine societal norms, mores, and traditional codes of conduct:

> It will consequently not suffice merely to extrapolate from *Yvain* a blanket condemnation by Chrétien of Arthurian ideals and chivalric claims. To be sure, *Yvain* does poke fun at those innocents who might wish to attribute to these ideals the same values one associates with the worlds of *Aiexis* and *Roland*. Moreover, Chrétien exposes, with humor and with charm, the insufficiency of monolithic and one-dimensional social ideals when these are construed as model codes of behavior and applied rigidly in a world that never lives up to them. Elements of satire permeate *Yvain*. However, Chrétien refrains from offering any equally systematic alternative to inadequate Arthurian courtliness. (211)

The "one-dimensional" attributes of the virtuous and unyielding knight, although subtlely undercut by Chrétien, is still a very popularly held ideal of knighthood even now. Chrétien's approach to the subject of proper knighthood is displayed in humor and carefully constructed barbs which he embeds in his narrative. Uitti continues his argument by drawing both subject and author close together in their development:

> As Yvain grows in chivalry, acquiring as he proceeds a new name, so the narrator grows in clergie; he acquires a form of mastery of his craft. He ends up where, given the structures present at the beginning of the text and given the expectations of readers of romance, he "ought to have started." Once he has completed his story, his former innocence and wrong-

> headedness are transformed into a consciously celebrative and charmingly phrased irony. (227)

Inasmuch as Chrétien never openly criticizes Yvain. The story tells itself as our hero performs deeds apparently knightly, runs into obstacles both external and internal, grows, performs redemptive acts, and finally wins back the hand of the lady he prizes. The cycle of success, fall, and redemption are not lost on Chrétien or to the reader whose ears are opened to hear the author's ironic voice throughout.

Chrétien is not alone in his subtle criticisms of the age in which he lived. He had several poetic contemporaries who shared not only some of his questions but also the methods in which these questions were discussed. The twelfth century was a time of turbulent change in social, economic, political, and spiritual spheres. During a time where fast-paced societal change appeared the norm, it would be only natural to find challenges to commonly held belief-structures in all areas of life. Chrétien's ability to fasten his audience's attention to specific cultural contexts and reference points and then play with the most fundamentally held assumptions of its societal structures marks him as an extremely deft ironist:

> In view of the spirit of dialectic which pervades twelfth-century romance we should not be surprised to find that almost from the beginning the poets are capable of undermining the very values which their works purport to mediate and that a thread of irony runs through the whole development of romance (see Green, 39). What are perceived, on account of their appropriateness and familiarity, as romance conventions may be displaced by shifting contextual detail so as to appear in constantly changing perspectives which rob them of any definitive or absolute value and leave them to function as either beacons or decoys. (Hunt 23)

Hunt's referral to Green is most appropriate. It becomes the task of the reader to interpret truth in what appears to be stated and then undone to draw the conclusions necessary and to do so without spoonfeeding. Indeed,

> The ironist leaves work for the audience to do; they must make his truth their own by reacting against what he appears to mean, so that his purpose in saying something other than what he means is not to deceive with a lie, but to awaken to a truth. (Green 8)

The truth exists within familiar contexts but often lies beneath the surface of appearances. Although social mechanisms appear to be functioning in familiar and recognizable patterns, they offer merely cold comfort as their truest purposes are not easily identified. Chrétien asks the questions, makes suggestions, and presents juxtapositions. The responsibility of the audience is to weigh both sides of the issue.

Green's arguments are very persuasive. The ironist leaves everything for the audience to interpret. He presents us a carefully constructed text and leads the reader to draw similar conclusions that he, as the author, likely also possesses. All of this is meticulously designed in order to absolve the author of any conclusions the reader may come to should political forces take an unfavorable turn. It is indeed a dramatic means by which the author may avoid direct conflict, as well as have a greater latitude in self-expression and subtle criticism. Medieval authors had much in the way of criticism to offer the vocation of knighthood and although some medieval authors may have had their own misgivings about the role of the clergy, they did nonetheless have some common ground with their mutual concerns surrounding chivalry:

> Criticism of knighthood is no rarity before the romance, but when we turn to knightly authors we find not so much an outright condemnation as a number of shrewdly realistic comments which bear on the idealization of chivalry [and] by implying reservations, could suggest a reluctance to accept this simplistic solution and therewith a tacit agreement with some of the clerical objections to knightly practice. (Green 54)

Chrétien de Troyes' presentation of *Yvain*, the subtly ironic tale of a wayward and somewhat oblivious knight, serves both aesthetic and ethical purposes. Chrétien agrees with clerical concerns of knighthood without being contributory to their political objectives while maintaining the aesthetic integrity of both his craft and subject. Direct condemnation is neither as effective or timeless as a work which subtlely explores the divine callings of knighthood while craftily criticizing the temporal manifestations of it in the shapes and guises of mortal and fault-prone men.

The aesthetic representation of serious moral and ethical issues surrounding human conduct and expression is a practice which is found throughout history and across cultures. Richard Barber looks at Chrétien's *Yvain* very much within this vein. He sees Chrétien's *Yvain* as part of a larger picture which explains in greater detail the societal forces and concerns of the medieval mind. To him, the knightly tales are a fictional exploration of the psychic fabric which existed in the hearts and minds of the court, the territories where valor and honor had meaning and, drawn from a rich tapestry of historical legend and epic, beautifully represented to the listener a world in which significance can be found:

> The writers of the chansons de geste were expert storytellers, heirs of local, almost tribal traditions who kept to a realistic, active world, whose only touches of fantasy were the giants and monsters fighting for the enemy, and whose heroes were moved by the simple emotions of loyalty

> and hate. The troubadours were lyric poets, and hence preferred to move in an introspective world where feeling was paramount, and the setting of their love merely ornamental. Chrétien offered a very different atmosphere. He is international where the jongleurs are national, analytical where the troubadours are subjective. Drawing on the love of the action of the knights and the longing for love stories of the ladies, and blending both with the newly current 'Breton tales' of Celtic marvels and enchantments, he created a new world and cast a spell over chivalry from which it never quite awoke. (105)

Chivalry, the knight's idealized code of conduct, is forever undercut with the touches of Chrétien's fantastic narratives. But there is much more to Chrétien's *Yvain* than a highly crafted fantasy. Ambiguities in Yvain's words and deeds, brash and reckless responses, and unexplainable and irrational behavior causes the reader to wonder why *Yvain* is constructed in such a manner. The lofty virtues of knighthood are not simply celebrated, as in *The Song of Roland*, for example; they are also questioned. Chrétien's *Yvain* is a carefully crafted fantastic tale of a world where definitions of courtly masculinity and chivalry are given, turned upside down, and then put back together again. He does not deceive himself or his audience that knights are imperfect, full of faults, foibles, weaknesses, and prone to moments of lapse in their knightly roles and duties. Chrétien's knights are examples both of what is best and what is worst in the nobility. *Yvain* is not an epic tale in terms of participating in a broader historical and social significance, or of serving the common weal in terms of having a moral imperative, but is instead a grand tale exploring the interior regions of the hearts of men. The ambiguity of *Yvain*, and the hero's identity as a knight, does not limit our reading, but, rather, expands it to consider multiple readings of knighthood and broaden our understanding of how the warrior related to, and existed in, the courtly world.

The Heike Monogatari: Knighthood in Medieval Japan

The medieval warrior in Japan during the Kamakura era was an individual who was completely linked to social and political change. The warrior's position in society was a precarious one. On the one hand, he held a prestigious position and had ample opportunity for advancement and reward, but, on the other, he could only do so as the unquestioning servant who, at times, was expendable in his master's plans. *The Tale of the Heike* is a classic text which represent political turmoil and violent conflicts which ravaged Japan, and which brought the Taira clan from the heights of absolute rule and prosperity to complete annihilation. *The Heike Monogatari* is an intense and potent fictional history that brings the elements of the past into a somewhat orderly and manageable text and has been a primary source of Japanese understanding of samurai loyalty and character. The literary world of Japan is replete with many legendary figures of fighting prowess and commanding characters. It is those found in the exemplified models of samurai in the *Heike Monogatari* who are the very archetypes of elevated behavior for men, the very essence of what the warrior qualities of loyalty, fearlessness, proper conduct, and resourcefulness.

As we examine the *Heike Monogatari* for all of its qualities as a literary work, we must also be conscious of its place in Japanese history, its construction and revisions, as well as the readership of its own day. Butler, in his article, "The Textual Evolution of the *Heike Monogatari*," clearly articulates how the *Heike Monogatari* evolved from a recitation of *biwa houshi* (blind "lute priests") to its presently accepted form through a series of phases and revisions. *The Tale of the*

Heike evolved along several lines of revisions until 1371 when the *Kakuichi* become the prominent version and generally accepted as the standard text. The *Kakuichi* text is the only one of all the early versions in which the authors are identified, along with its composition dates. Although there is a strong argument that the *Heike Monogatari* was developed solely for recitation, there are also persuasive arguments present that assert that it was developed primarily as a text to be read (29). Despite some of the ambiguity of the formative years of the *Heike Monogatari*'s development, the *Kakuichi* text of 1371 is a fusion of the various competing versions which preceded it, perhaps drawing on elements outside the schools of recitation as it grew. Previous versions, such as the *Hiramatsuke* text of 1235, used the *Heike Monogatari* as a source of inspiration and instruction for the tutelage of acolytes in their Buddhist orders. The *Kakuichi* absorbs this process by infusing different perspectives of Buddhism throughout the text as it draws on a wider base of competing perspectives. The authorship of what we have today in the *Heike Monogatari* is the best collaborative effort which one could hope for. Authors of competing versions of the *Heike Monogatari* had, for the most part, been able to complement one another in the *Kakuichi* text, bringing to it details of both sides of the epic conflict between the Heike and Genji clans in order to produce the best possible result in the construction of the text which has evolved into the standard (5-38).

The Tale of the Heike, in the version which has been passed down from the fourteenth century, has had, and continues to have, a profound influence on Japanese ideology and cultural identity. In contrast to the lack of immediacy of

twelfth-century history and literature for the minds of contemporary Western civilization, *The Tale of the Heike*'s affect on Japanese thought cannot be underestimated:

> From this age of the clan wars comes the main source of those romances that have delighted generations of audiences in the popular kabuki theater as well as in the classical Noh plays, and have formed an ideal of bravery and loyalty for all Japanese. The effect of this ideal on Japanese thought and on later Japanese history has been very marked extending right into the twentieth century. The modern situation in Japan is, of course, changing very rapidly under the full impact of technology. But at least until recently the famous names of medieval Japan have probably been more intimately present to the minds of their countrymen than the corresponding figures exactly contemporary with them would be to Western minds. (Morton 60)

The Tale of the Heike is a powerful testament to the past and a continual reminder to present day readers of the role of warriors in history. The idealized characters and archetypes of samurai behavior we find in the *Heike Monogatari* are unique to Japan. These great warriors, however, operate on two distinct levels. On one level, they are representations of the pinnacle of loyalty and the best examples of fighting men. On another level, they live and operate within a greater thematic context, that of a world which is in the midst of dramatic change and chaos:

> Although the Taira may be viewed as both warriors and courtiers, the Minamoto who appear in the pages of *Heike Monogatari* are, with few exceptions, clearly drawn as the dynamic military leaders of the new age. The book's pervasively tragic tone is sustained even in the treatment of these victors: for example, in the vivid detailing of the death in battle of the first great Minamoto field general of the Gempei War, Yoshinaka (1154-84), and in the foreshadowing of the doom of the second, Yoshitsune (1159-89). But otherwise the Minamoto represent the future, and indeed some of them and their followers are portrayed in terms of the exaggeratedly superior prowess and courage that were to become stereotypical of the war tales of the medieval age. (452)

Although *The Heike Monogatari* portrays the utter destruction of the Taira clan* it is very much a narrative which addresses immediate concerns of both political and religious institutions. The admonishments against pride frame the text on the outset while meta-human warriors play their roles as loyal retainers and ferocious samurai. Despite the grandeur of these characters, the narrator begins with warnings which identify man's place in the universe, the failings and inadequacies of mortal efforts, and the transience of individual existence.

Regardless of the best hopes of medieval thinkers and authors to find meaning despite chaos, the reality of a social and political order crumbling into ruin was most certainly impossible to ignore. The Kamakura era is replete with violence and social turmoil. To spiritual leaders, this was not the realization of an eternal cycle of death and rebirth, but rather, the end of reality as it was known, the complete destruction of the spiritual traditions which maintained order in the universe:

> The waning of an aesthetically brilliant court society, accompanied by warfare, natural disaster, and disruption, gave to the twelfth century a pervading mood of pessimism. This pessimism was accentuated by widespread belief that the age was one of *mappo*, or "the end of the Buddhist law." According to Buddhist tradition, history would progress through three stages following the death of the historical Buddha, Gautama (ca. 563-483 B.C.). First, there would be a stage of *shoho*, or "the flourishing of the law," when the teachings of the Buddha would be thoroughly understood and practiced everywhere. This would be followed by a time of *zoho*, or "the reflected law," when the Buddhist teachings would still be known, but would not be accepted or practiced with the same vigor as before. Finally, there would come an age of *mappo*, when the Buddhist law would disappear and darkness and ignorance would descend upon the world. (Varley: *Warriors of Japan* 16)

* Taira is the term used to describe the blood-related parts of the Heike, while Heike is used to describe the structure of the entire household complete with servants, warriors, and any other loyal elements.

Paul Varley extends the argument that within this sense of pessimism also existed a realization, one which is not negative but which is accepting in its understanding of the true nature of human existence:

> Despite the mappo pessimism of the times, it was in fact largely in Buddhist terms that the first positive attempts were made to explain the reasons for the rise of the military and their new role in state affairs. The author or authors of the famous war tale, *Heike Monogatari* (*Tale of the Heike*), express a pessimistic attitude of resignation and an acceptance of military struggle as a reflection of the impermanence of all things . . . (16)

Varley argues that Kamakura society, due to the general upheaval of the nation and the uncertainty of the future, made the people pessimistic. While it is true that large segments of various Buddhist orders truly believed that the end of the world was at hand, *The Tale of the Heike*, to some extent, does not share this sense of utter hopelessness. There is a sense of ease throughout the text, and, although there is a recognition that life is fleeting and mortal pride is futile, an acceptance of the inevitability of death is accompanied by a tone not of despair, but of calm recognition. There is no sense of hopelessness in the heroic deaths of samurai within the narrative, but rather, a belief that one has played one's role in a reality which is continually changing, continually struggling.

Scott Morton, further explores this Buddhist understanding of existence within the context of the realities which faced medieval samurai. The samurai fought because it is in their nature to do so. Life and death are qualities which are of relative consequence, and it is in how the warrior behaves in life that gives him an identity in death:

> There is another feature of Buddhism in general that may have had a peculiar appeal to men accustomed to take risks and to stake all on the outcome of a battle or an individual combat, and that is the Buddhist sense of the transitory nature of human life and glory. Many samurai . . . were far from being crude, unthinking fighters. Glory and honor were of great importance to them, but they were intelligent and subtle enough to realize that these things were transitory. They welcomed a rationale which would account on a universal scale for the known and experienced fact, *sic transit gloria mundi*—"thus passes the glory of the world." (62-63)

This notion of impermanence is one of the central themes of the *Tale of the Heike*. Within this theme of the immutability of time and man's mortal nature we have a duality that exists in human conflict. The samurai, knowing his fleeting nature in reality, is completely loyal and obedient to his master. He knows that because life is short it ought to be lived correctly, that it ought to be treasured. It is a seeming paradox. Because life is short and immortality unknowable, the samurai hurls himself into battle, heedless of the danger that surrounds him. In this regard, death has no hold on him except that of a warm embrace after a short life of pain and misery.

A central tenet of the samurai's world is that of loyalty to his master. Loyalty is a non-negotiable, eternally binding agreement between lord and vassal. Disloyalty, betrayal of one's lord, is the most dishonorable attribute that any man can have. Because of the samurai's unflinching loyalty to his master, the warrior is supposedly prepared to undergo any test, withstand any painful experience, even to the point of death, as long as it serves his master's wishes. This quality of absolute service to the lord did not mean that the typical warrior need be reckless and foolhardy with his own life and safety. In order to avoid a potentially dangerous situation, Tadamori takes special care to guard himself against his

enemies. He reminds himself that "It would be a grief to my family and to me if I let myself be humiliated through lack of foresight. Besides, the book says, 'Take care of yourself so you can serve your master'" (24): The samurai's responsibility is primarily to his lord, but in order to do so the warrior must be equipped and prepared for any occasion. Because Tadamori took care of himself, he prevented his enemies from humiliating him, and in turn preserved his master's good name.

Loyalty as a virtue that frames the samurai's identity and provides the foundation on which other qualities are developed. Without loyalty, other virtues have no context or meaning. The Tokugawa period text, *Hagakure*, addresses this quality of loyalty with the utmost seriousness:

> If one were to say in a word what the condition of being a samurai is, its basis lies first in seriously devoting one's body and soul to his master. And if one is asked what to do beyond this, it would be to fit oneself inwardly with intelligence, humanity and courage. The combining of these three virtues may seem unobtainable to the ordinary person, but it is easy. Intelligence is nothing more than discussing things with others. Limitless wisdom comes from this. Humanity is something done for the sake of others, simply comparing oneself with them and putting him in the fore. Courage is gritting one's teeth; it is simply doing that and pushing ahead, paying no attention to the circumstances. Anything that seems above these three is not necessary to be known. (66)

Intelligence, humanity, and courage are most certainly worthwhile endeavors but without loyalty they are unfocussed virtues. A master may value such virtue but unless he has loyalty from his subject they are of little use to him. Service, in the world of medieval samurai, gives meaning to all action. The *Hagakure*, a collection of transcribed discussions with Yamamoto Tsunetomo, give the samurai directives by which he must live but the focus of all these directives

hangs on simple, total, and unbending commitment to the plans and desires of one's temporal master.

As previously discussed, the Buddhist concept of *mappo*, which engenders an over-riding sense of pessimism, can be viewed as a hopeless diagnosis for the state of human existence. All seems futile and meaningless if the world will simply die and fade into dark oblivion. But to the warrior, such a grim finality is a blessing rather than a curse. Although it is true that everything must one day die, the present moment has enough energy and life to make existence worthwhile. Death is still a reality for everything that lives. Its advance is unstoppable, so the question of the human condition is simply how one faces its inevitable arrival. To a Tokugawa period audience, a time when the warrior did not do battle but existed under a single totalitarian authority, Yuuzan Daidouji addresses these concerns:

> One who is a samurai must before all things keep constantly in mind, by day and by night, from the morning when he takes up his chopsticks to eat his New Year's breakfast to Old Year's night when he pays his yearly bills, the fact that he has to die. That is his chief business. If he is always mindful of this, he will be able to live in accordance with the paths of Loyalty and Filial Duty, will avoid myriads of evils and adversities, keep himself free from disease and calamity and moreover enjoy a long life. He will also be a fine personality with many admirable qualities. (Yuuzan 15)

Knowing death on intimate terms gives the warrior a sense of living. Our reaction to death defines how we live. A denial of dying and death had, and still does have, its own dangerous psychological consequences. In a medieval context, it may define the individual as a coward and an individual who knows no honor. In a contemporary context, it makes seemingly rational people do things like having their heads cryogenically preserved for future thawing, regeneration, and grafting

to yet-to-be-invented cybernetic bodies. Medieval thinkers were not strangers to how a lack of loyalty or focus to higher powers and structures would adversely affect one's behavior and thought. Daidouji Yuuzan, in *Code of the Samurai* addresses this directly:

> But he who is not brave . . . will appear to be only superficially loyal and filial to his lord and parents and without any sincere intention of remaining so. Indifferent to his lord's rules and his parents' dislikes he is given to wanton strolling where he should not be, doing what ought not to be done, and in everything putting his own inclination first. He loves to sleep both in the morning and afternoon and particularly dislikes having to study. As for the military arts, he knows all about them but disdains to practice them, merely boasting about his skill at what he cannot do and full of enthusiasm about some useless folly, He spends any amount of money on luxurious feasting, and throws away his allowance and mortgages his salary without the least foresight. But where he ought to spend he is stingy and will not even bother to repair the chipped lacquer and broken cordage of the old armor he inherits from his father. Much less will he buy any new suits or any horse furniture to make up for losses. His health is too poor for him to serve his lord properly, and he has no consideration for the trouble and anxiety this causes his parents. He eats and drinks too much and is excessive in sex matters, and this using up and filing away of his physical powers and longevity is due to nothing but a weak and untutored mind incapable of self-control, and so we shall not be far wrong in diagnosing it as the source of cowardice in a samurai. And so can the valiant be distinguished from the pusillanimous, even while sitting on the mats at home. (34-35)

There is a striking difference in behavior between the loyal, and thus brave, warrior and the samurai who feigns loyalty. Loyalty provides the bedrock of character and gives the individual definition. Loyalty pushes the individual to greatness and excellence, rather than selfish mediocrity. To a loyal warrior, priorities become clear and action can thus be swift. To the lazy boastful samurai, there is a constant struggle between what ought to be done and what the individual desires in terms of personal comfort and indulgence.

This clarity of focus and purpose is a recurrent theme in the *Heike Monogatari*. It is both stated and implied through exemplary warriors throughout the text. Loyalty, in the context of the *Heike Monogatari*, was not merely the automatic devotion of warriors to their lord, but a quality of mutual devotion and mutual sacrifice. Just as the individual samurai relinquishes power over himself to his lord, the lord does the same to his higher authority. Everyone involved in this equation is inextricably attached to forces beyond his control to which he pledges total devotion until death. This relational quality can be thought of in terms of a chain of commitment, based on personal loyalty to one's immediate master which leads from the least vassal to the heads of powerful households. *The Tale of the Heike* discusses how the warrior demonstrates his loyalty and faithfulness to his lord:

> In the past, three commitments had been required of a Commander who went forth from the capital to destroy an enemy of the court. On the day when he received the Sword of Commission, he forgot his lineage; when he prepared to leave home, he forgot his wife and children; when he engaged the foe on the battlefield, he forgot his life. Most movingly, those same resolves must have been in the minds of the Heike leaders, Koremori and Tadanori. (186)

For the masters, it would seem, having loyal followers would simply ensure the best chances to fulfill military objectives. On a practical level, this much is certainly true. No military campaign can be completely successful with disloyal and untrustworthy troops. In the lord and vassal relationship, however, loyalty also gave the individual warrior a sense of purpose and belonging and it is this quality which defines the individual not only in his relationship to others but also secures his own sense of self-identity.

Nobutsura, loyal and faithful retainer of Prince Mochihito, is marked in the *Tale of the Heike* as a warrior of unflinching devotion. Having had an opportunity to flee from his master's soon-to-be executioners, he stands firm in his lord's defense. To his master's entreaty to flee and hide he responds:

> "The Police will probably come to the mansion soon to seize you, and it would be a pity if they found nobody on duty," Nobutsura said. "Everyone knows I serve you. If I am not there tonight, people will say, 'He ran away that night like all the rest.' A man who follows the path of bow and arrow must avoid the slightest stain on his honor." (140)

Nobutsura knows that absolute loyalty is a death sentence but through loyalty he is also defined as someone who truly lives. "Avoid[ing] the slightest stain" on his character is not a boastful or self-grandizing act; it is the definitive statement of identity. A long life as a coward and as someone who shirks and hides form responsibility is nothing in comparison with a brief life of completely binding oneself in loyalty to a higher authority and calling.

Loyalty to one's lord comes in different forms, not all ending in the annihilation of the warrior-servant. Yorimasu, lord of Watanabe no Chojitsu Tono, not wanting to be captured alive, commands his vassal to perform for him a final service:

> Yorimasa summoned Watanabe no Chojitsu Tono. "Cut off my head," he said.
>
> Tono burst into tears, unable to bear the thought of taking the head from his master's living body. "I cannot kill you. I promise to cut it off after you kill yourself," he said.
>
> "Your feelings are natural." Yorimasa turned toward the west, chanted ten Buddha-invocations in a loud voice, And spoke his last sad words:
>
> umoregi no — No flower of fortune
> hana saku koto mo — has blessed a life resembling
> nakarishi ni — a long-buried tree—
> mi no naru hate zo — yet how bitter is the thought

kanashikarikeru that all should end like this.

> Without another word, he thrust the tip of his sword into his belly and fell forward, his vitals pierced. Although we would not expect a verse of a man at such a time, Yorimasa had been an ardent poet since boyhood, and he did not forget his avocation at the end. Tono took the head, fastened it to a rock, his tears streaming, stole undetected through the enemy ranks, and sank it in the depths of the Uji River. (157)

Watanabe no Chojitsu Tono lives to see another day. His master's, and thus his own, honor is preserved as the head is hidden away*. Without hesitation Yorimasa takes his own life, knowing that he has done all he can in service to his House. The text recalls Yorimasa's devotion to poetry as well, the verse coupled with the final act of suicide is suitably coupled in the samurai ethic. The act of verse making is not lost to the samurai. It is briefly knowing some quality of life, of identifying the individual's place in death, or perhaps of even stating something significant about the relational qualities that exist between living, loyalty, and death.

Loyalty and death are inextricably bound to one another in the *Heike Monogatari*. The question of loyalty, however, does not merely apply in that warriors must pledge their devotion to their lords. It also exists in the contexts of family and loved ones. During an escape from his enemies the renowned warrior Kaneyasu meets his son Muneyasu. The son, Muneyasu, has not fared as well as his father in regards to warrior accomplishment. He is, in fact, everything that his father is reported not to be. Muneyasu is extremely fat and is found lying on the

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* Historically in Japan, taking the heads of the enemy served several purposes. Acquiring the head of a great warrior was evidence of one's own fighting prowess and also increased morale, and with it the potential of reward or advancement. Conversely, losing one's head to the enemy, was also considered a shameful and ignominious end to one's life.

field of battle with grotesquely swollen feet. Kaneyasu has the opportunity to retreat but decides to stay with his son and fight to the bitter end. Kaneyasu knows the fate of the warrior and performs final services to both his lord and his son:

> As the party rested there, Imai no Shiro Kanehira came up at a gallop, followed by fifty yelling riders. Kaneyasu fired his seven or eight remaining arrows in swift succession, and five or six enemies fell stricken. (It is impossible to say whether or not they were killed.) Then Kaneyasu drew his sword, decapitated Muneyasu, entered the enemy ranks, and killed many warriors in a furious onslaught before he finally died in battle. His retainers tried to commit suicide after fighting equally well, but they were taken alive, exhausted and suffering from many grievous wounds. They died two days later, and their heads were hung with their master's at Sagi-ga-mori Woods in Bitchu. When Lord Kiso saw the heads, he said, "Ah, they were valiant fellows. Each of them deserved to be called a warrior worth a thousand, I wish they could have been spared." (274)

Lord Kiso's acknowledgement of the greatness of Kaneyasu and his men is a simple recognition of not only the valor of a fallen enemy, but also the unique quality of warrior loyalty and how that quality moulds and shapes men. Kaneyasu's loyalty to both lord and child enables him to act without hesitation or reluctance. Loyalty makes him fierce and powerful whereas divided loyalty, ambiguous devotion, and a lack of focus, although possibly lengthening his life, would have made him entirely forgettable.

After the episode of the death of Kaneyasu, Lord Kiso finds that he too cannot escape his predestined demise. Just as Kaneyasu's loyalty represents a special quality that exists between father and son, Lord Kiso's loyalty to his House is parallel to the loyalty that exists between himself and his mistress Tomoe. Tomoe is an unusual woman warrior figure in the *Heike Monogatari* who

is capable of rivaling any of the men in Lord Kiso's company. Despite her ability to defend herself, however, Lord Kiso sends her away:

> "Quickly, now," Lord Kiso said to Tomoe. "You are a woman, so be off with you; go wherever you please. I intend to die in battle, or to kill myself if I am wounded. It would be unseemly to let people say, 'Lord Kiso kept a woman with him during his last battle.'"
>
> Reluctant to flee, Tomoe rode with the others until she could resist no longer. Then she pulled up. "Ah! If only I could find a worthy foe! I would fight a last battle for His Lordship to watch," she thought.
>
> As she sat there, thirty riders came into view, led by Onda no Hachiro Moroshige, a man renowned in Musashi Province for his great strength. Tomoe galloped into their midst, rode up alongside Moroshige, seized him in a powerful grip, pulled him down against the pommel of her saddle, held him motionless, twisted off his head, and threw it away. Afterward, she discarded armour and helmet and fled toward the eastern provinces. (292)

Bonds of loyalty reflect actions across several relational spheres. Tomoe demonstrates her loyalty to her lord by acting valiantly against his enemies. She obeys her lord and flees from the enemy but as she escapes from the battle she brutally kills one of his enemies as a final sign of her devotion to him. Tomoe's act of loyalty may have well outstripped many of her male compatriots. It may also be Lord Kiso's devotion and loyalty to the love he feels for Tomoe that compels him to order her away. Tomoe continues to live and flourish. It is her lord's final request for her and out of both love and loyalty that she escapes to live, and perhaps even fight, another day.

Lord Kiso leaves his lady to meet his death. This act is not one which takes place isolated from others, but rather, is based within the bonds of tacit loyalty within kinship. Kanehira, hearing the fading voice of his liege delivers a

chilling address to his enemies as he prepares a grisly demonstration of his loyalty to Lord Kiso:

> "I don't need to fight to protect anyone now. Take a look, easterners! This is how the bravest man in Japan commits suicide!" He put the tip of his sword in his mouth, jumped headlong from his horse, and perished, run through. Thus, it turned out that there was no combat worthy of the name at Awazu. (293)

This passage is a representation of the extent to which the warrior is loyal to his lord, even though such loyalty often ends in either suicide or death. Although devotion to one's feudal lord is often demonstrated through violence against his enemies, loyalty to one's feudal master is also demonstrated by men and women who perform ritual suicide. *The Tale of the Heike* is full of examples of loyal vassals who commit suicide rather than serve another House. The warrior, in the act of killing himself in devotion to his master, also makes the powerful statement that serving the enemies of his master is the last thing that a man of honor would ever want to do. Although it seems that an over-glorification of death and physical annihilation are focal virtues of the samurai code, other emotions and reactions are also part of the warrior's experience. A striking parallel to the Kanehira incident is that of Naozane who meets Tayuu Atsumori, a handsome seventeen-year-old Commander-in-Chief who reminds Naozane of his own son. Naozane cannot find the heart to finish off Atsumori and take his head. Atsumori, defeated and refusing to give his name to Naozane, stoically demands that the older man take his head "and be quick about it" (317). In the end, Noazane has little choice. He knows what he must do:

> Overwhelmed by compassion, Naozane could not find a place to strike. His senses reeled, his wits forsook him, and he was scarcely conscious of his surroundings. But matters could not go on like that forever: in tears, he took the head. (317)

And then Noazane laments:

> "Alas! No lot is as hard as a warrior's. I would never have suffered such a dreadful fate if I had not been born in to a military house. How cruel I was to kill him!" He pressed his sleeve to his face and shed floods of tears. (317)

The samurai warrior is far from a mindless brute, the flexed biceps of his feudal lord. He is a sophisticated individual of both deep unbending commitment and equally deep feeling. It is loyalty, however, that gives lease to both. Without loyalty the warrior cannot be distinguishable as an individual of relentless focus, and without such a binding relationship samurai like Naozane could not experience such compassion and feeling without such a code to play it against.

Although loyalty is the defining feature of the samurai and it frames his identity, there are times, naturally, when loyalty and personal wishes are at odds with one another. Even Kiyomori, lord of the Heike, must also exemplify the qualities of loyalty. He is not necessarily loyal to mortal man but he, too, must be loyal to higher powers and forces to which he must be held accountable. He, too, must obey. During an episode in which Kiyomori is called into account for his aggressive behavior by his son Shigemori, the lord of the Heike considers berating his son for opposing him but then remembers that Shigemori "was a man who obeyed the Buddhist Five Commandments and made compassion his highest ideal, and who displayed the Confucian Five Constant Virtues and punctiliously observed the rules of decorum" (74). At the time of this episode, Kiyomori is

waiting to go to war and is dressed in armor, complete with breastplate. He quickly pulls over a monk's robe to conceal the armor in order to meet Shigemori. Although Kiyomori is still in the position of chancellor, he has taken the tonsure. His position at this time seems to be one which is caught between worldly and spiritual demands. When Shigemori and Kiyomori are sitting together and the son finally works up the nerve to confront his father, the reader is presented with a fascinating clash of ideologies:

> "What's the matter with you?" Kiyomori asked, disconcerted.
>
> Shigemori restrained his tears. "Your words make it seem that your luck has come to an end. Whenever a man's fortunes are on the wane, sinful acts enter his mind. Furthermore, I cannot believe my eyes when I look at you. Even though ours is a land of remote, obscure islands, tiny as scattered millet grains, hasn't it always been a breach of decorum for a man who has attained the chancellorship to put on helmet and armor? Hasn't that always been improper, ever since Amaterasu's descendants have reigned and Amanokoyane's have conducted affairs of state? And you a monk besides! When a man discards sacerdotal robes—the garb worn by the Buddhas of the past, present, and future to symbolize freedom from the bonds of suffering—and hastens to array himself in helmet, armor, bow, and arrows, he commits sins against Buddhism by breaking the commandments and losing his sense of shame, and he also ignores the Confucian principles of benevolence, righteousness, proper demeanor, wisdom, and good faith. Forgive me for using such language to one who has every right to demand my respect, but I must not conceal my opinions.
>
> "In this world, we have what are known as the Four Obligations: debts we owe to heaven and earth, to sovereigns, to parents, and to all living things. The most important is our debt to the sovereign. 'Under the all-embracing heavens, there is no land but the King's.' Thus, we are told, it was understood, even by the sages who washed their ears in the Ying River and broke off bracken at Shouyang Mountain, that the rules of decorum forbid us to disobey a sovereign's edict . . . Japan is the land of the gods, and the gods do not tolerate impropriety. (74-75)

Shigemori's criticisms of his father's rash decision to make war makes our inquiry into the nature of the samurai's conduct much more clear. The gods of Japan do not tolerate improper conduct, and lords and kings must be loyal to their

laws or face the consequences. A lord that "loses his sense of shame" and ignores Buddhist and Confucian principles cannot properly lead. Shigemori's moving speech is not so much a statement against warmaking or the role of fighting men in the natural order, but rather, a statement against misguided uses of armed conflict when one's heart and mind are not properly aligned with wisdom and good faith. The proper samuraj must demonstrate restraint, coupled with benevolence. He ought not fly into action at the slightest provocation. Justice is brought about through prudence and wisdom, and true harmony can only be known when the warrior no longer needs his armor, sword, and bow. Of Shigemori's position against his father, the *Heike Monogatari* states that:

> When there is an admonishing subject in a state, that state will always be at peace; when there is an admonishing son in a household, that household will always be in order. Shigemori was such a subject as has seldom been seen, either in remote antiquity or in these latter days. (78)

In a feudal system where blind loyalty would seem to be the sole prerequisite for social harmony, we are told that disagreement, even that which borders on dissent, is critical for a nation to be at peace. Shigemori defied his father, the most powerful man in Japan to his face and states that benevolence is more powerful than violence. Shigemori not only epitomizes what true loyalty ought to be for the samurai warrior but also epitomizes another critical quality of the fighting man—fearlessness.

Living without fear cannot be a conscious decision. We may argue that fearlessness is either innate or gradually developed over rigorous exposure to the things which terrify us most. Fearlessness seems to be a quality which exists

within the individual and grants him the ability to make quick and at times, impulsive decisions. The *Heike Monogatari* is packed with examples of fearless warriors, men who plow ahead into the ranks of their enemies, who perish by the sword, who take their own lives, and who do all of this without a moment's hesitation. Fearlessness as an ideal, however, is not addressed directly within the *Tale of the Heike*. Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* describes more clearly what fearlessness is and what it means for a warrior to be courageous. Yamamoto Tsunetomo identifies a relational quality that exists between fearlessness and freedom:

> We all want to live. And in large part we make our logic according to what we like. But not having attained our aim and continuing to live is cowardice. This is a thin dangerous line. To die without gaining one's aim is a dog's death and fanaticism. But there is no shame in this. This is the substance of the Way of the Samurai. If by setting one's heart right every morning and evening, one is able to live as though his body were already dead, he gains freedom in the Way. His whole life will be without blame, and he will succeed in his calling. (17-18)

The *Hagakure* calls for singular devotion and focus on one's goal. There is no shame in failure but rather, in not trying. The samurai must turn his entire being, his total resources and energies towards his objective and then drive forward. Living as if you were already dead is not necessarily a death sentence but, rather, it is a release from the fear of pain and dying, a release from the fear of failing. An uncompromising pursuit of one's goals at all costs either results in achieving one's objective or realizing that one was never meant to achieve it. There is a kind of grim satisfaction in knowing that the outcome in either event is largely

irrelevant. The *Hagakure*'s concern is primarily not with the achievement of goals but with the proper conduct of the samurai striving forward towards them:

> Above all, the Way of the Samurai should be in being aware that you do not know what is going to happen next, and in querying every item day and night. Victory and defeat are matters of the temporary force of circumstances. The way of avoiding shame is different. It is simply in death.
>
> Even if it seems certain that you will lose, retaliate. Neither wisdom nor technique has a place in this. A real man does not think of victory or defeat. He plunges recklessly towards an irrational death. By doing this, you will awaken from your dreams. (30)

Yamamoto Tsunetomo's strongly worded advice is meant to shock the listener and to shake him from sleep. Plunging ahead into reckless action is preferable to inaction. Yamamoto Tsunetomo quotes Lord Naoshige in this regard: "Lord Naoshige said, 'The Way of the Samurai is in desperateness. Ten men or more cannot kill such a man. Common sense will not accomplish great things. Simply become insane and desperate'" (45). Also citing Oki Hyobu, Yamamoto is recorded as saying:

> It is said that every time Oki Hyobu's group gathered and after all their affairs were finished he would say, "Young men should discipline themselves rigorously in intention and courage. This will be accomplished if only courage is fixed in one's heart. If one's sword is broken, he will strike with his hands. If his hands are cut off, he will press the enemy down with his shoulders. If his shoulders are cut away, he will bite through ten or fifteen enemy necks with his teeth. Courage is such a thing." (107)

Courage is the relentless pursuit of one's goals. In the case of a samurai at war, the goal would be the destruction of his master's enemies. If fearlessness is ingrained in the warrior's heart and mind, he will act instinctively and never stop pursuing his goal until he himself is completely obliterated.

These words we find in the *Hagakure* are echoes from the *Heike Monogatari*. Nobutsura, whom we have encountered earlier, refuses to abandon his lord and instead abandons himself to his committed purpose. Nobutsura has resigned himself to his station in life as loyal vassal of the Prince. Having had an opportunity to flee and save his own life, Nobutsura stands his ground and, despite knowing that he was hopelessly outmatched, fights on:

> One of the Police underlings, a bold, strong fellow named Kanetake, fixed his eyes on Nobutsura and leaped up on the veranda, followed by fourteen or fifteen of his cohorts. Nobutsura tore loose the sash and collar of his hunting robe, threw off the garment, unsheathed his sword (a ceremonial blade, but one that had been forged under his careful supervision), and laid about him mercilessly. Although his adversaries fought with oversized swords and long spears, the blows from the guardsman's sword sent them hopping down into the courtyard like leaves scattering in a gale. (141)

And following Nobutsura's capture we read the following of his steely resolve and fearless commitment to his master:

> Kiyomori sat inside the blinds. Munemori stood on the veranda and ordered Nobutsura's captors to deposit him in the main courtyard. "Is it true, fellow, that you used your sword, saying 'What do you mean, official order'? They tell me you killed and wounded many Police underlings. Question this man until you learn everything; then take him to the riverbed and decapitate him," he said.
>
> Nobutsura was not at all perturbed. He uttered a derisive laugh. "Someone has been nosing around the Prince's mansion every night lately, but we didn't think anything of it, so we were not on guard," he said. " When a band of armored men came in on us, I asked who they were, and they called themselves messengers bearing an official order. I have often heard that bandits, pirates, and strong-arm robbers say, ' The gentlemen of the family are on their way in,' or 'We are messengers bearing an official order'; therefore, I said, 'What do you mean, official order!' I would not have let any of your men come back whole if I had been wearing armor, a helmet, and a keen blade. I don't know where Prince Takakua is. Even if I did, do you think your questioning could get anything out of a samurai who had decided not to talk?" He said no more. (141)

Nobutsura is a prime example of how the samurai is expected to face death and the enemies of his master. Hopelessly outnumbered, Nobutsura fights on. He throws himself headlong into his task without considering any of the consequences of his actions. The samurai ethic, as exemplified by Nobutsura, is not one based along the lines of cause-and-effect thinking. It is simple and principled. Although the principles of total and unswerving obedience may be derided by critics as primitive and unenlightened, unflinching devotion is a commonly praised characteristic among believers of many world religions. At any rate, it appears that in this case the Heike warriors themselves had no small amount of admiration for their vanquished enemy:

> "There's a strong, brave man for you!" the men in the long rows of Heike samurai said to one another. "It seems a pity to behead such a fine fellow."
>
> "While he was serving in the Retired Emperor's Military Office a few years ago," someone said, "he went out alone after six robbers who had broken past the provincial guards. He killed four of them and captured two; the court rewarded him with a lieutenancy in the Military Guards of the Left. Ah, he is a warrior worth a thousand!" (142)

We read with some frequency of "warriors worth a thousand" in the *Tale of the Heike* but such extravagant descriptions of fighting men were applied only to those who truly exemplified the best qualities of the samurai. Nobutsura did not fear death. If he feared anything, it would have most likely been the fear of not truly committing himself to both his master and his own personal code. For the warrior, failure in loyalty means a total failure in being. It is fearlessness which preserves loyalty, and it is fearlessness which defines loyalty's depths.

Although we may conclude that the *Heike Monogatari* is a fictionalized history, the characters and events described within the text have a profound sense of realism. In war epics and medieval romances, characters are naturally exalted beyond typical mortal standards and their actions in battle are raised to be feats of superhuman proportion. During the famous battle on the Uji bridge, Jomyo Meishu stands head and shoulders above his fellow samurai. He personifies the most fearless warrior during the episode and is seemingly invincible as he leaps into the fray of swords and arrows. What makes this encounter all the more impressive is that the planks from the bridge had been removed in order to slow the advancing forces so Jomyo, in order to engage the enemy, he needed to run across the remaining bridge beams to do so. The terrible scene leaves his cohorts trembling, hesitant to take even the first step forward:

> "You must have heard of me long ago. See me now with your own eyes! Everyone at Miidera knows me! I am the worker-monk Jomyo Meishu from Tsutsui, a warrior worth a thousand men. If any here consider themselves my equals, let them come forward. I'll meet them!" He let fly a fast and furious barrage from his twenty-four-arrow quiver, which killed twelve men instantly and wounded eleven others. Then, with one arrow left, he sent the bow clattering away, untied and discarded the quiver, cast off his fur boots, and ran nimbly along a bridge beam in his bare feet. Others had feared to attempt the crossing: Jomyo acted as though it were Ichijo or Nijo Avenue. He mowed down five enemies with his spear and was engaging a sixth when the blade snapped in the middle. He abandoned the weapon and fought with his sword. Hard-pressed by the enemy host, he slashed in every direction, using the zigzag, interlacing, crosswise, dragonfly reverse, and water-wheel maneuvers. After cutting down eight men on the spot, he struck the helmet top of a ninth so hard that the blade snapped at the hilt rivet, slipped loose, and splashed into the river. Then he fought on desperately with a dirk as his sole resource. (153)

The image of Jomyo standing on the bridge beams and running through his enemies brandishing his sword and dirk is a powerful image of the relentless

samurai warrior. Jomyo's entire identity is expressed in the moments he stands on the bridge beams. The passage with Jomyo takes a curious turn as we then read:

> Ichirai died in battle, Jomyo crawled back, removed his armor and helmet on the grass in front of the Byodoin, and counted sixty-three arrow dents in the armor. Five shafts had penetrated the leather, but none of the wounds was serious. He treated the places with moxa, wrapped his head in a cloth, donned a white clerical robe, broke his bow to make a staff, shod his feet in low clogs, and set off toward Nara, chanting the name of Amida Buddha.
>
> In emulation of Jomyo's example, the Miidera monks and the men of the Watanabe League dashed across the beams, one after another. Some returned with trophies; others, grievously wounded, cut open their bellies and leaped into the river. The battle on the bridge raged like a fire. (154)

Jomyo seems to have attained his purpose as a samurai warrior. Unflinchingly he destroys many enemies and fights as far as he can. Having achieved victory as far as he sees fit, he retreats from the field, and then abandons his first vocation. Normally, we might find this somewhat odd as we expect the true samurai to pursue his master's foes until he himself is completely annihilated, but it seems that it is his example as the fearless warrior and his transformation into the [illegible] being of the monk-priest which truly distinguishes Jomyo from other samurai. The fires of the battle have cleansed Jomyo and have metamorphosed him into a new disciple of Amida Buddha.

Fearlessness, however grand in the example of Jomyo, is not always a lofty virtue. Fearlessness has the characteristics of relentlessness, ferocity, and mercilessness. Fearlessness grants the warrior the opportunity to act rather than ponder, to react rather than reflect. Tadazumi's exemplification of is a striking contrast to that of the divine revelations granted to Jomyo:

> Just then, Tadazumi's page galloped up from the rear, drew his sword, and lopped off Tadanori's right arm at the elbow. Tadanori may have felt that his time had come, for he said, "Give me room for a while. I want to recite ten Buddha-invocations." He gripped Tadazumi and hurled him a bowlength away. Then he began to recite ten evocations in a loud voice, facing westward: "His light illumines all the worlds in the Ten Directions; he saves sentient beings who recite his name, he does not cast them away." Tadazumi came up behind and cut off his head before he had finished. (314)

The utter brutality of Tadazumi to Tadanori is the darker side of fearlessness. Tadazumi's act is without hesitation. To Tadazumi, emotion and sentiment have no place in his actions. The executioner simply executes the enemies of his master. Tadazumi's expeditious actions are reflected in Noritsune, another fearless samurai, who aboard his boat faces three attackers:

> The three took a small craft alongside Noritsune's boat, boarded it with yells, and attacked in concert, their heads lowered and their swords drawn. Not in the least perturbed, Noritsune approached Sanemitsu's retainer, who was advancing in the lead, and kicked him into the sea. Then he clamped the second man, Sanemitsu, under his left arm and the younger brother, Jiro, under his right, gave them both a mighty squeeze, and sprang into the waves, saying, "All right, come on! Be my companions in the Shide Mountains!" He was twenty-six years old. (380)

Noritsune, like Tadazumi, fights with chilling resolve against his enemies. Both warriors act, seemingly without deep reflection of their deeds. Tadazumi's interruption of Tadanori's invocation of the Buddha may have serious metaphysical implications. Nevertheless, he dispatches his enemy without hesitation. Noritsune's statement of dragging his enemies with him to the Shide mountains also seems to be the act of a warrior scarcely concerned with eternal life or the state of man's immortal soul. Such a scant regard for eternal life and religious meaning appears to be a quality common to the samurai class. In

contrast to Kumagae Naozane who becomes a monk out of remorse for the killing of Atsumori or Jomyo Meishu who finds enlightenment after battle, samurai like Tadazumi and Noritsune appear to be the total opposite in demeanor and character. What they are, in fact, are different facets of the same samurai code. They exemplify another element of mercilessness and brutality which stem from fearlessness. These warriors were not necessarily encouraged to consider too deeply religious matters perhaps for fear that their selfless and loyal attention may be divided between temporal and eternal masters. A samurai of split loyalties may not be as effective against the enemies of his lord as one who is completely focussed on the destruction of any who oppose the master to whom he is singularly loyal.

It seems that divided loyalty is precisely the quality against which the samurai must fight. Divided loyalty between duty and desire can erode the loyalty one is required to have solely for his master and robs the individual of his ability to be fearless. Examples of the failed samurai are few in the *Tale of the Heike* but one which is unforgettable is that of Munenobu:

> With enemies in pursuit and his horse weakening, the Prince's foster brother, Munenobu, jumped into Niino Pond, and putting duckweed over his face, stayed there, trembling, while the hostile riders passed. Presently, a boisterous group of four or five hundred mounted warriors returned, bearing on a shutter a headless corpse in a sacramental white robe. Munenobu saw that it was the Prince, with Koeda, the flute he had wanted in his coffin when he died, still tucked into the waistband. Munenobu longed to rush forward and embrace the body, but fear held him back. After the enemies had all gone, he emerged from the pond, wrung out his soaked garments, put them on again, and went weeping into the city, where he became an object of universal censure. (158)

Munenobu's impulsive act of self-preservation, his moment of selfishness, costs him everything. He is not remembered as someone who died alongside his master but as someone who put his own physical well-being ahead of that of his master. To the samurai code, the fact that the Prince and Munenobu were most certainly destined to be brutally butchered by their enemies is irrelevant. Needless to say, all men die, and samurai men tend to die sooner than most. The sole question which faces the fighting man is how he faces the inevitable. It is in that moment of knowing that one must and will most surely die that death is no longer menacing and the individual is free. Fearlessness through true loyalty gives the samurai his lease on life and his freedom from the fear of death.

This imperative sense of living life without hesitation enables the samurai to live without shame. Shame belittles the individual and reduces him to the sum of the opinions of others around him. Shame destroys what loyalty creates and ennobles. The *Heike Monogatari* gives us a powerful testimony of what shame does to a once seemingly loyal retainer:

> Thanks to his splendid, long-winded steed, Morinaga escaped without incident. He later found refuge with a Kumano monk, the Onaka Dharma Bridge. After the monk's death, he went to the capital with the widow, a nun who was prosecuting a lawsuit, and there he was widely recognized by high and low as Shigehira's foster brother. "Morinaga is a shameless fellow," people said. "Shigehira thought the world of him, but he refused to face death at his master's side. Instead, the wretched creature turns up with a nun, of all things!" We are told that the criticism seems to have embarrassed even so dishonorable a man, and that Morinaga used a fan to hide his face. (315)

Morinaga hides his face because he is no longer in control of what he can present to the outer world as himself. His identity is forfeited in his wrongful act of

selfishness. Morinaga had once been honored as being Shigehira's loyal retainer, a position which may require sacrifice should the situation require, but yet a position of some esteem and benefit. The shame attributed to Morinaga is not the same that would be applied to an ordinary person but to a man elevated as warrior in the feudal structure to which he is dedicated to support and protect under their collective leader's direction. The once proud warrior loses both his interior face, that of his position and respect earned from others, and the freedom to reveal his physical face to the world around him.

It is difficult to criticize Morinaga too much, inasmuch as self-preservation is not such a seemingly ignoble act as self-neglect. Despite some of our tendencies to easily forgive Morinaga for this indiscretion, we must realize that Morinaga is held to a standard which supercedes that of normal citizenry. He is a samurai warrior, one who is expected to have both elevated motives and deeds. Much more elevated and proper in thought and deed and far exceeding the conduct of normal retainers, the leader of the clan must exemplify the greatest warrior virtues of all. In the Heike clan, the leader is none other than Kiyomori himself. In what seems to be an extremely fantastical situation Kiyomori exemplifies to his warriors, and to the readers of the *Heike Monogatari* that he is the penultimate warrior, fearless and unshrinking even when facing the very personification of Death itself:

> Again, Kiyomori left his curtain-dais one morning, pushed open the outer door, and found the inner courtyard full of innumerable skulls, which clashed and rebounded with a frightful clatter and rumble, rolling up and down and in and out. He called for his attendants. "Is someone on duty? Is anyone around?" But nobody happened to be within earshot. All

> the skulls came together into a single enormous whole, larger than the entire garden—a veritable mountain a hundred and forty or fifty feet high. In that great head, there appeared thousands and myriads of big human eyes, all of which fixed on Kiyomori with an unblinking angry stare. Kiyomori stood his ground unperturbed, glaring back, and the wrath in his gaze made the great skull vanish without a trace, just as frost or dew melts in the sun's rays. (172)

Although this passage certainly leads us to believe that the *Heike Monogatari* is a fictionalized history, the intent behind it and its meaning as a representation of fearlessness is not lost on the reader. The chief of the Heike, Kiyomori, is a man who is beyond the standards of common samurai. He is the most fearless and the most ruthless. Death means nothing to him and, even as it stares him in the face, he does not cower or retreat. Kiyomori may be larger than life in the *Heike Monogatari* and may well be wrong in his deeds as his House is brought to utter ruin, but he is, for the moment, the unflinching and unbending fearless master of his entire clan. Even the horrifying image of the mountain of angry skulls mean nothing to him. Kiyomori's deeds as a man are secondary to the manner in which he faces death. How we live is secondary to how we face death.

The quality of these men is measured by their ability to face their undeniable and unnegotiable end. The samurai quality of fearlessness grants the warrior the resolve to die with his honor intact. This is a theme which runs through many of the episodes. Sanemori, a particularly distinguished character in the *Heike Monogatari*, is a warrior who searches his whole life for a suitable end to his samurai existence. Because Sanemori is a samurai well into his seventies and, therefore most likely to be denied the opportunity of battle, he dyes his white hair and beard black and charges headlong into battle. Tezuka no Taro Kanezashi

no Mitsumori of Shinano faces Sanemori and the two address each other, as is customary between two warriors of name and stature. Mitsumori gives Sanemori his full name while the senior samurai explains he has private reasons for concealing his identity. The men grapple and, although Sanemori decapitates one of Mitsumori's retainers he is stabbed under his armor, wrestled to the ground, and killed. Mitsumori decapitates the body and takes the head to Lord Kiso, commenting on the peculiarity of the situation as the mystery man's armor and markings were not that of a regular samurai's but seeming to be that of a Commander-in-Chief. Lord Kiso and his men believe that they may know the face of the decapitated head and orders that it be washed to confirm their suspicions. Discovering the true identity of Sanemori, the men weep at the loss of such a magnificent warrior (234). Today in the Kaga district of Ishikawa Prefecture, there is erected a set of bronze statues depicting the scene of the realization of Lord Kiso and his men that the dead warrior is Sanemori. Lord Kiso cradles the head of Sanemori in his lap in a very affectionate manner, as if he were holding a newborn child.

Sanemori lived many years as a samurai and had known that a man can only live if he is prepared to die fearlessly. Restricted from engaging the enemy as an old man, Sanemori hides his age and enters the fray. Denied death on his own terms in the past, he chooses how he will meet his end and reacts appropriately. Lord Kiso and his men do not necessarily weep for the loss of Sanemori but perhaps also for the full knowledge of how the samurai must live and die, perhaps for knowing that the truest life can only be reflected in this kind of death.

Sanemori's character, his relentless pursuit of living and dying as a samurai warrior, adds new dimensions of meaning to the interior world of these fighting men.

The interior world of humans, the quality we often identify as "character" or perhaps "essence" is one which was of some preoccupation to Daidouji Yuuzan. Sanemori may be an excellent example of a samurai who possessed a remarkable character. Consistency, steadfastness, and inner fortitude are all characteristics desirable in the samurai. Daidouji Yuuzan states that the samurai is someone that the state must be able to depend on in both times of war and times of peace:

> The duties of the samurai are twofold, military and constructive. When the land is at war he must be in the camp and field day and night and can never know a moment's rest. And it is with the camp that construction is associated, for what with the strongholds and moats and embattled camps and fortified outposts all ranks have to work continuously as fast and as strenuously as possible. But in peaceful times there is no camp duty and consequently none of the construction connected with it, so the various ranks of samurai under their commanders are allotted to fixed duties as guards, escorts, inspectors, and the like, and come to regard these stay-at-home functions as the normal ones for a warrior family, and think of field service as nothing but a dream of the past. Then, when at times the honor of assisting the shogun's government in its building is conferred on the daimyos and the expense of this is so great that they have to pass some of it onto their retainers, and request a contribution of a percentage of their salaries, they grudge it and grumble as though it were an exaction, because they do not realize that to take part in both military and constructive activities is the regular business of samurai. (82-3)

The duties of the samurai were primarily to defend his lord and destroy his enemies but there were many times when warriors were not at battle and were needed for the day by day tasks and duties relating to empire building. Daidouji Yuuzan argues that the samurai's place is to be at the complete service to his

master, and the capacity of such service is to be determined by his lord. Furthermore, he ought to do his duties without reticence or begrudgement. Sacrifice is called for of samurai warriors in both war and peacetime, although the latter is far less glamorous than the former.

In peacetime it is indeed laborious work to set one's sights on his master's goals, to resign oneself to what seems to be drudgery and poverty, and maintain one's principles consistently throughout. Nitobe, in his classic modern period text, *Bushido*, focuses on what he sees as the principle material necessary for the samurai to maintain his "course of conduct":

> Here we discern the most cogent precept in the code of the samurai. Nothing is more loathsome to him than underhand dealings and crooked undertakings. The conception of Rectitude may be erroneous—it may be narrow. A well known bushi defines it as a owner of resolution;--"Rectitude is the power of deciding upon a certain course of conduct in accordance with reason, without wavering;--to die when it is right to die, to strike when to strike is right." (23)

Nitobe's focus on the prime characteristic of excellence in samurai conduct may seem excessively rigid and unwavering. We can easily associate the necessity for rectitude in warrior conduct to not only be a key component in fearlessness on the battlefield, but also be a prerequisite for the long-lived warrior to remain selflessly devoted to his master. To Nitobe, rectitude is the singularly most critical quality in developing a proper samurai.

As an interesting contrast to what appears to be Nitobe's absolute stance on samurai character, Yamamoto Tsunetomo in the *Hagakure* regales us with different reports of the characteristics of fighting men:

> Yamamoto Jin'emon always said to his retainers, "Go ahead and gamble and lie. A person who will not tell you seven lies within a hundred yards is useless as a man." Long ago people spoke in this fashion because they were only concerned that a man who was "correct" would never do great works. They also ignored the misconduct of men and dismissed such matters by saying, "They do good works, too . . ."
>
> Men like Sagara Kyuma also excused retainers who had committed theft and adultery and trained them gradually. He said, "If it weren't for such persons, we would have no useful men at all." (113)

Nitobe may be dealing with the world of ideals, of what men ought to hope to become. The *Hagakure* reports to us instances where the ideal does not necessarily fit neatly into a world of imperfect and fallible men. Although the contexts and intended audiences of the *Hagakure* and Nitobe's *Bushido* are markedly different, they both shed light on the issues surrounding the *Heike Monogatari*'s presentation of samurai warriors. Yamamoto Tsunetomo's text is literally "a pile of leaves" in that piecemeal thoughts and reflections of the life and condition of the samurai are recorded by a scribe. Each statement we find in his text, although at times contradictory, describes parts of the whole samurai experience. Nitobe's *Bushido* is a text originally written in English to explain Japanese concepts to a Western audience. In essence, it serves as an apologist's text for Japanese philosophical and social perspectives. The fact that we find differing presentations of the same ideal of samura life does not necessarily imply that these views are at odds, but rather, that they are differing insights and perspectives of a larger whole. The famous image of five blind men describing an elephant is a parallel of what both Yamamoto Tsuretomo and Nitobe do when discussing samurai codes and experiences. The *Tale of the Heike* accommodates both views and the seeming contradictions that lie between. *The Tale of the Heike*

supports both of these perspectives of human nature. The narrator emphasizes the importance of seeking the ideal in personal conduct but is also non-judgmental of men who are less than ideal in maintaining elevated codes of personal conduct.

Kiyomori, as a prime example, is peerless as ruler of the Heike. He is a powerful character in the text, a man prone to brash action, and his deeds eventually bring about the utter destruction of his entire household. Despite these enormous shortcomings, Kiyomori is still largely unjudged in the text by the narrator. His greatness as a warrior is unquestioned and his ferocity unmatched. Kiyomori's inability at times to restrain his emotional reactions to perceived threat underscores the necessity for another key trait of great fighting men—prudence.

Although the *Hagakure* and Nitobe's *Bushido* do not appear to be in total agreement about honesty as a prerequisite for the samurai's vocation, they appear, nevertheless, to be on parallel tracks about self-control and restraint. Of personal restraint when faced with the antagonisms of others, Nitobe refers to Count Katsu who states:

> I had the hilt of my sword so tightly fastened to the scabbard that it was hard to draw the blade. I made up my mind that though they cut me, I would not cut. Yes, yes! Some people are truly like fleas and mosquitoes and they bite—but what does their biting amount to? It itches a little, that's all; it won't endanger life. (136)

The *Hagakure* cautions and advises the warrior as follows:

> One should be careful and not say things that are likely to cause trouble at the time. When some difficulty arises in this world, people get excited, and before one knows it the matter is on everyone's lips. This is useless. If worse comes to worse, you may become the subject of gossip, or at least you will have made enemies by saying something unnecessary and will

> have created ill will. It is said that at such a time it is better to stay at home and think of poetry. (81)

When tempers flare and harsh words are exchanged, there is little that anyone can do to retrieve them. Hot words quickly turn to rage, and rage turns to brash actions and violence. Unfocussed anger brings only chaos and danger. Eventually all those within range are either destroyed or at least damaged in some way. Yamamoto Tsunetomo's counsel to "stay home and think of poetry" to soothe one's emotions and Count Katsu's reasonable admonishments that others' backbiting is nothing of consequence are sensible cures for things which would lead the samurai to act imprudently. The significance of guiding samurai to practice self-restraint was not only a virtuous activity but also has pragmatic concerns as well. An explosively violent warrior who reacts to everything which antagonizes him is largely ineffective in a true battle and a liability to other warriors of his house. Nitobe informs us that the training of samurai was focussed far more on the inner qualities of the man than the physical practice of sword play and archery. He argues that the popular image of the enraged samurai is somewhat misplaced:

> The morbid excess into which the delicate code of honor was inclined to run was strongly counterbalanced by preaching magnanimity and patience. To take offence at slight provocation was ridiculed as "short-tempered." (76)

He follows the same argument later in his text with:

> The question that concerns us most is, however,--Did Bushido justify the promiscuous use of the weapon? The answer is unequivocally, no! As it laid great stress on its proper use, so did it denounce and abhor its misuse. A dastard or a braggart was he who brandished his weapon on undeserved occasions. A self-possessed man knows the right time to use it, and such

times come but rarely. (135)

The samurai's character is determined far more by how he exercises restraint than how he kills his enemies. Daily consistent dedication to the maintenance of one's heart in self-control is equal to service of the samurai who launches himself into enemy ranks to kill for his master. We may be persuaded to argue that self-restraint is a more difficult virtue as it is the continual securing of energy and rage while battle is merely the release of it.

Developing a whole and meaningful character is a life-long work for samurai men. Temperance, prudence, and reserve, are extremely unexciting and often ignored virtues. These qualities, quiet though they may be, define the individual to a large extent. They also permit the individual to know compassion and mercy, to be able to discern right from wrong, and to give reliable counsel in difficult situations. In the *Tale of the Heike*, these virtues of samurai men come to light typically in the aftermath of battle and in the quiet reflection of one's actions and also those of the enemy. Shigemori is the most visible character who exemplifies these virtues but there are also others. Munemori and his son Kiyomune, members of the Heike clan, are captured by Yoshitsune and his warriors. The prior battle had been explosive and brutal, the chaotic sounds of fight and the bloody deaths of many more were most surely witnessed by all who were there, grim images of war likely etched into each man's mind. It is after the battle, in the calm spaces between violent engagements, where we find this remarkable passage:

> After the captives had been paraded to the riverbed and back, Munemori and his son were installed in Yoshitsune's quarters at Rokujo Horikawa. Food was offered, but they were too distraught to take up the chopsticks. They shed ceaseless tears, exchanging glances in silence. At nightfall, Munemori simply spread a sleeve and lay down without loosening his robes. His guards, Genpatsuhyoe, Eda no Genzo, and Kumai Taro, noticed that he had covered Kiyomune with the other sleeve. "Ah! For high and low alike, nothing causes so much grief as parental affection. What protection can a sleeve give the boy? It is easy to guess how much the Minister loves him." Dauntless warriors though they were, they all shed tears. (387-88)

We are left with the striking image of these fearsome stoic men, warriors capable of extreme violence, weeping at the image of the father hoping to protect his son with the sleeve of his robe. It is this witnessing of the love Munemori has for his boy which moves them to tears. This is a demonstration of reflection made possible through the cultivation of the temperate warrior. The inner character of the true fighting man becomes tangible in a compassionate moment.

The characterization of samurai warrior, particularly those of Yoshitsune and his men, has a wide spectrum of many different perspectives. In *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*, Ivan Morris argues that a certain brand of Japanese pathos marks the nation's greatest heroic figures, and he counts Yoshitsune among them. A fascinating and possibly debatable thesis, Morris's argument identifies a key point in the elevation of individuals as representations of particular human characteristics. Although Benkei does not appear in the *Heike Monogatari*, his existence, as well as that of his master Yoshitsune, is within the same timeframe as the text. Morris' extrapolation of Benkei as the ultimate warrior is indicative of the common practice of elevating warrior virtue and deed out of the reach of common mortal man:

> Everything about Benkei is larger than life, from the time of his remarkable birth (he stayed for eighteen months in his mother's womb), through his childhood when he was reputed to be eight feet tall and as strong as a hundred men, until the climax of his career as Yoshitsune's loyal follower, a terrifying colossus of a man with his black armour and murderous battle club, who is capable of fantastic feats. Nor was he a mere brainless bully: apart from his physical strength Benkei displayed humour, wisdom, and (as we can tell from his *tour de force* at Ataka barrier) an impressive erudition. For all his blustering violence, he was capable of much charm and even gentleness. Above all he was a paragon of loyalty, whose devotion to his master became ever greater as the situation grew more desperate. (93-94)

There is an image of Benkei in bronze that stands out over Japan's Ataka barrier west of Komatsu city today. His representation is intimidating in every manner as he looks over the waves of the Sea of Japan. He is a powerful example of loyalty and character. Having cultivated a rich interior life, Benkei is able to be as powerful with words and example as he is with the weapons of war. In this regard he is a paragon example of how one ought to be of best service to one's master. A blindly violent and uncontrolled Benkei may have made for some sensational examples of brutality but the loyal vassal of Yoshitsune that we know is far greater than his mere physical presence. Because of his finely crafted character, Benkei dominates his role as Yoshitsune's servant and protector to such an extent that he eclipses the identity of his lord and becomes the focal point of their story together.

Benkei's ability to excel in erudition balanced with his fighting prowess makes him great. He is capable of much more in the world of swords, clubs, and arrows because of his highly developed sense of self. For the reader of texts about him or for the audience of the Noh, Benkei exemplifies far more than the great

physical prowess of a great fighting man. Although we may be able to visualize the grandeur of Benkei and the significance he has for Yoshitsune, the warrior is still in need of a more immediate example to emulate and follow. Yamamoto Tsunetomo recognizes this; and while lamenting his belief that so often words are incongruent with deeds, he guides us with his words of counsel:

> Today, however, there are no models of good retainers. In light of this, it would be good to make a model and to learn from that. To do this, one should look at many people and choose from each person his best point only. For example, one person for politeness, one for bravery, one for the proper way of speaking, one for correct conduct and one for steadiness of mind. Thus will the model be made. (35)

The development of the good samurai may be a piecemeal operation but it is the best that one can hope for. If the craft can be completed, reliable samurai who are not mere soldiers but truly noble warriors can be realized. An excellent example of how such a man is manifested and realized by others, the *Hagakure* tells us of a man named Morooka Hikoemon:

> Because of some business, Morooka Hikoemon was called upon to swear before the gods concerning the truth of a certain matter. But he said, "A samurai's word is harder than metal. Since I have impressed this fact upon myself, what more can the gods and Buddhas do?" and the swearing was cancelled. (43)

Because of his powerful character, Morooka Hikoemon is able to say simply what he means and can be believed at face value. The cultivation of character, coupled with iron resolve, is the samurai's singular focus. Martial arts practiced even to this day emphasize the development of the mind over that of the body. This practice, it is believed, will be the most effective way to develop as an ordinary body controlled by an intensely disciplined mind is far more powerful than a

weak mind which attempts to control a physically strong body. It is generally believed that an individual who has a normal physique and moderate physical strength but who has strong mental focus is a greater physical threat than someone who, although physically large and strong, lacks a mental edge.

Strength of character and a cool disposition are tremendous resources. Seeing options where others see difficulty, envisioning difficulties as challenges rather than obstacles, and pushing oneself towards growth at every opportunity are significant requirements needed for the samurai. *The Heike Monogatari* praises loyalty, fearlessness, and the development of character as integral qualities of the samurai warrior. One last quality is needed, however, to round out the samurai, that of resourcefulness. Resourcefulness can also be closely associated with ingenuity and innovation. It gives the individual the opportunity to make gains when everything else seems lost. *The Heike Monogatari* cites a potent example of resourcefulness in the Taira Major Counselor Tokitada:

> Next, the Taira Major Counselor Tokitada went to Mount Hiei as an official envoy. (He was Commander of the Left Gate Guards at the time.) The monks of the Three Compounds assembled at the Great Lecture Hall courtyard in an ugly mood. "Knock off that fellow's court hat," one of them said. "Tie him up and drown him in the lake," another suggested.
>
> Tokitada spoke as they were about to lay hands on him. "Compose yourselves for a moment. There is something I must say to you."
>
> He drew a small inkstone and a piece of paper from his breast, jotted down a line, and transmitted it to the monks. Upon opening the message, they saw written, "When soldier-monks perpetrate acts of violence, that is the work of evil spirits; when the Emperor reprimands them, that is proof of the protection of the Buddha." They could not bring themselves to harm him after reading those words. "What he says is right," they agreed, and all of them went off to their hollows and cells.
>
> It was admirable that Tokitada required only one piece of paper and one sentence to calm the wrath of the Three Compounds and the three thousand monks and to preserve himself and the court from humiliation.

> People were also impressed by the monks' behavior. "I had regarded the Enryakuji soldier-monks as incapable of anything except boisterous confrontations, but now I see that they understand the difference between right and wrong," someone remarked. (55)

Tokitada speaks to the soldier-monks in a language which they can understand. This is the very advice that Kiyomori himself failed to comprehend and was thus destroyed. Tokitada impresses on the hearts and minds of his aggressors that wanton violence violates the code of the Buddha. Others admire Tokitada not necessarily for his knowledge of the teachings of Buddhism but for his cool reserve and resourcefulness in disarming an angry mob of three thousand.

The relationship that we find between religious themes and human resourcefulness is fascinating. We may have a tendency to believe that religious teachings are immutable, that they cannot be broken or bent for the purposes of mortal self-interest. Sanesada, frustrated to the point of tears that he has passed over for promotion in the ranks of the Heike nobles, expresses his dissatisfaction to Shigekane. He receives the most resourceful counsel:

> I have a fine new idea. What is to keep you from going to pray at Itsukushima in Aki Province, the shrine the Heike set such great store by? If you stay seven days, you will be bound to attract the attention of the throngs of elegant shrine attendants who dance there, and they will entertain you. When they ask what you have shut yourself up to pray about, you must tell them the truth. Then, at the time of your departure, they will express regret, and you must take the chief among them back to the capital with you. Once there, they will of course visit Nishihachijo, where they will tell the whole story when they are asked the reason for your pilgrimage to Itsukushima. Kiyomori is a very emotional man; he will be delighted that you have gone to pray before his revered goddess, and will be sure to find a way for your wish to be granted. (85)

It works and the narrator responds:

> What a splendid strategy! It was a pity Narichika did not try something clever of that kind instead of plotting a senseless revolt, which destroyed him and brought terrible suffering to his children and dependents. (86)

Narachika is a man who did not behave and think like Sanesada. In staging a revolt against Kiyomori he was utterly humiliated and destroyed, his disobedience in plain sight for all to see. Sanesada, by contrast, uses false piety to maneuver through the turbulent waters of the Heike court and achieves his goal. The text demonstrates that the samurai warrior does not always need his blade and bow to gain victory. What is more important is the mind that controls the weapons, whether those weapons be physical or psychological. In this case, Sanesada, with some clever counsel, is able to move progressively forward, rather than be mindlessly obliterated for open and reckless rebellion.

The resourceful man is patient, waiting for chances and opportunities in order to press an advantage. Sanesada patiently waited for the shrine attendants of Itsukushima to report to Kiyomori of his piety to the Heike goddess. In another more battle-oriented example we find that patience even brings victory to the warrior in the midst of a heated fight:

> "Who are you? Give me your name," Nagatsuna said.
> "I am Nyuzen no Kotaro Yukishige, a resident of Etchu Province, aged eighteen."
> "Ah, how pitiful! My son who died last year would have been eighteen this year. I ought to twist off your head, but I'll let you go." He dismounted and sat down to rest while awaiting the arrival of friendly forces.
> "Even though he did spare my life, he is a glorious opponent. I must find a way to kill him," Yukishige thought. He sat down.
> Nagatsuna began to tell a story, completely off guard. Then the boy, who was very quick, drew his dagger, flew at him, and stabbed him twice in the face. Meanwhile, three of Yukishige's retainers came

> galloping up to join their master. Nagatsuna was undaunted, but it may be that his luck had run out, for he finally died as he battled there, outnumbered and grievously wounded. (233)

Yukishige is clearly outmatched in strength by Nagatsuna but in the hopes of finding some future advantage, he waits until he can attack. Whether or not Yukishige saw his retainers approaching at the time he leapt at Nagatsune is not clear but waiting momentarily before attacking was key to his victory. Nagatsuna's "luck had run out," and fortune now favored Yukishige.

As modern readers, we may find Yukishige's conduct less than stalwart but the *Heike Monogatari* makes no such judgements. The line between sneakiness and resourcefulness becomes blurred, victory at any cost, at times, is completely acceptable. We find the same general acceptance of cunning throughout European romance literature as well as the knight is permitted almost any means in the pursuit of his goals, whether they be in battle or love. In a curious exchange between Inomata no Koheiroku Norītsuna and Etchu no Zenji Moritoshi we see that trickery may be acceptable in any form as long as it ensures a victorious outcome. Moritoshi and Noritsuna engaged one another in battle, both reputed to be men who possessed the strength of many men, and Moritoshi subdues Noritsuna in such a way that the vanquished man can hardly speak. Noritsuna collects himself for a moment and just as Moritoshi prepares to decapitate him says:

> Did you hear me announce my name? A man who kills an enemy does not perform a great exploit unless he takes the head after identifying himself and requiring the other to do the same. What will you gain by taking an anonymous head? (312)

Moritoshi pauses and makes the appropriate declaration of his name. When Noritsuna does the same, Noritsuna also quickly states that he is willing to use his influence to help save Moritoshi's Heike kinsmen as long as his life will be spared. Moritoshi refuses the ignoble offer and prepares to kill Noritsuna as intended. Noritsuna berates Moritoshi for being improper and disgraceful by arguing that to kill a man who has surrendered is to behave as a man who has no honor. Noritsuna then bides his time until other Genji warriors approach the scene, and then he attacks Moritoshi and kills him with a dagger in a very bloody and gruesome manner (312-13).

Moritoshi dies because his mind is not strong enough to see through Noritsuna's game. He is momentarily distracted and hesitates when he considers personal fame over accomplishing his prime directive in killing his master's enemies. Once Moritoshi drops his mental guard and begins to follow the lead Noritsuna gives him he becomes trapped, loses his edge, and is butchered by Noritsuna and other Genji warriors. Patience, mental maneuvering, and constant awareness of changing situations provides openings and potentialities to reverse one's situation. The *Heike Monogatari* provides us with another such brilliant example in Kaneyasu:

> During one of the northern battles, a Heike samurai, Seno no Taro Kaneyasu of Bitchu, had been captured by Kuramitsu no Jiro Narizumi of Kaga And placed in the custody of Narizumi's brother, Kuramitsu no Saburo Nariuji. Yoshinaka had spared Kaneyasu's life because of the valor and prodigious strength for which he was renowned. "It would not be right to kill a man like that," he had said. And Nariuji had treated Kaneyasu well because he had found him sociable, well-bred, And considerate. But it was as when Su Wu was captured by the Xiongnu, or as when Li Ling could not return to China. Li Ling wrote of how grievous it

> was for a man of old to languish as a prisoner in a foreign land. Kaneyasu likewise "protected himself from the wind and rain with leather elbow patches and felt tents, and staved off hunger and thirst with raw meat and kumiss." At night, he lay sleepless; by day, although he seemed a model of obedient service (willing, indeed, to do anything short of chopping wood And cutting grass), he watched with awesome determination for an opportunity to catch his enemies off guard, strike them down, and rejoin his old masters. (271)

The opportunity finally presents itself when

> During the nightlong welcoming party, Kaneyasu's people plied the warden Nariuji and his thirty men with drink until they collapsed; then they stabbed them all to death, one by one. (271)

There is no time limit to how long one ought to be patient. Kaneyasu waited many days, played the role of a servant, affected an agreeable and sociable disposition in the face of his enemies, and carefully calculated up until the last moment the death of his captors. The sheer brutality of Kaneyasu and his ability to wear a mask of peaceful captivity itself is terrifying. But Kaneyasu never forgets who and what he is. His identity is firmly rooted in loyalty to his masters, fearlessness permits him even to play act with his captors, his character allows his performance to be believable, and his resourcefulness enables him to achieve victory. In these respects, Kaneyasu is a classic example of samurai conduct.

Although we find throughout the *Heike Monogatari* many examples where samurai act in ways which on the surface appear to be ignoble, their contradiction to the more lofty associations of warrior conduct are never specifically criticized. Nevertheless, personal code seems to be the most important factor in determining the samurai's true worth. Yamamoto Tsunetomo in the *Hagakure*, exemplifies

this in his own life and addresses the question of how a man ought live as a true warrior:

> How can one human being be inferior to another? In all matters of discipline, one will be useless unless he has great pride. Unless one is determined to move the clan by himself, all his discipline will come to naught. Although, like a tea kettle, it is easy for one's enthusiasm to cool, there is a way to keep this from happening. My own vows are the following:
>
> Never to be outdone in the Way of the Samurai.
> To be of good use to the master.
> To be filial to my parents.
> To manifest great compassion, and to act for the sake of Man.
>
> If one dedicates these four vows to the gods and Buddhas every morning, he will have the strength of two men and will never slip backward. One must edge forward like the inchworm, bit by bit. The gods and Buddhas, too, first started with a vow.' (169)

The task of the samurai is not necessarily to perform magnificent god-like tasks. It is to make a personal commitment to perform to the utmost of one's own ability and to inch forward with complete resolve to improve, to grow, and to make continual gains in one's own development and evolution. What is more remarkable than the *Hagakure*'s emphasis on physical action, and which is exemplified repeatedly throughout the *Heike Monogatari* is the intense emphasis on the development and cultivation of the self within the samurai ethic. To be a samurai means to grow in compassion and spiritual strength. Even the gods and Buddhas could only begin to grow with such a vow.

Running Across Bridgebeams: Similitude of Warrior Identity Between Cultures

Learning is a good thing, but more often it leads to mistakes. It is like the admonition of the priest Konan. It is worthwhile just looking at the deeds of accomplished persons for the purpose of knowing our own insufficiencies. But often this does not happen. For the most part, we admire our own opinions and become fond of arguing. --Hagakure

Determining authorial intent in fictional mediation is an extremely difficult enterprise. Divorcing our own particular religious and political perspectives, as well as our desires to see them justified in great literature, can be immensely tiresome work. Mimetic interpretation in *Yvain* exists along the lines of implication rather than statement, the suggested question rather than the bald depiction. Chrétien de Troyes' use of irony can be argued to have both aesthetic and political aims, each independent of each other. The *Heike Monogatari* can be equally argued to be aesthetically distanced along these same lines. In the contexts of the *Heike Monogatari*'s development of continued historical revisionism the authors were able to contribute to the text as a whole yet still enjoy the distancing of themselves from their additions by virtue of the text's aesthetic qualities. The end result is that a difference between the ideal and the fiction that represents it develops and text itself is not completely reliable. The key point is that these discussions and parallels of the creation of warrior literature and the methods in which they are mediated is stunning not only in each text's successful representation of fighting men but in each author's unwillingness to become directly embroiled in addressing their opening arguments or assertions and instead present these opening passages in a much more discursive manner. There appears to be three narrative parallels which exists between these two

independent texts: the assertion of theme, the retreat of the author from the forefront, and the mixed presentations of meaning in the narrative in both Chrétien's *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari*.

As we examine our two texts we find that although there are similar concerns, methods of mediation of theme, and the warrior's identity as a focal point, there are also many differences which exist due to cultural incongruencies. Although these differences, to some extent, may be of secondary significance to the greater underlying authorial motivations for the development of these texts, they do offer contexts which may explain other motivational elements that occur due to differences in culture, geography, and social structures. In and of themselves, the differences that we can readily see between the European knight and the Japanese warrior are also signifiers of underlying ideologies and world-views. The Japanese warrior fights to the bitter end, often resulting in one samurai taking the head of the other. European knights, in contrast, fight to subdue their enemy and are protected in cumbersome armor. The European knight is loyal to his temporal lord and master but also declares fidelity to his lover, an agent who may exist outside of the typical feudal relationships of duty we find in the Japanese medieval model. Japanese warriors often fight in units against a common enemy while the European knight, in the literature of romance, often acts alone, isolated from the camaraderie of his fellow warriors. The organization of fighting men, their training, texts and sources of information which teach young men how to become warriors, and customary practices of initiation of the knight

or samurai into a company of soldiers differ due to cultural expressions particular to each society.

In both *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari* bases of motivation and the identification of warrior acts as being unique or specific to class begins to take shape out of a hazy semiotic mist. For simple lack of terminology we use words like "chivalry" and "bushido" to describe warriors and warrior conduct. These words can only be understood as suggestions of the rich multi-layered subtleties that lay behind and between them. They are vague smudges of self-identification in a quagmire of definitions and doubled meanings. Nevertheless, these terms manage to represent, to some degree, socially recognizable codes of how fighting men ought to behave. They represent the identity, culture, and spirituality of fighting men. Nitobe, a twentieth-century apologist for the samurai ethic and an authority on the question of "bushido," addresses this question to some degree in his own dramatic fashion:

> What Japan was she owed to the samurai. They were not only the flower of the nation, but its roots as well. All the gracious gifts of Heaven flowed through them. Though they kept themselves socially aloof from the populace, they set a moral standard for them and guided them by their example. I admit Bushido had its esoteric and exoteric teachings; these were eudemonic, looking after the welfare and happiness of the commonalty; those were aretaic, emphasizing the practice of virtues for their own sake. (160)

Virtuous conduct for its own end is the driving motivation of the true warrior. These samurai were, according to Nitobe, divided between heaven and earth; they served virtues but also served temporal masters with worldly needs and objectives. In this regard, temporal conduct is ultimately the manifestation of the

practices of bushido. Although "the gracious gifts of Heaven" flow through the samurai, Yuuzan Daidouji, a sixteenth-century writer and author, makes the ethereal presentation a little more tangible in the temporal world:

> One who is a warrior should have a thorough understanding of these two qualities. If he knows how to do the one and avoid the other then he will have attained Bushido. And right and wrong are nothing but good and evil, for though I would not deny that there is a slight difference between the terms, yet to act rightly and do good is difficult and is regarded as tiresome, whereas to act wrongly and do evil is easy and amusing, so that naturally most incline to the wrong or evil and tend to dislike the right and good. But to be thus unstable and make no distinction between right and wrong is contrary to reason, so that anyone who understands this distinction and yet does what is wrong is no proper samurai but a raw and untaught person. (30)

Indeed it is "easy and amusing" to do evil things but to Yuuzan Daidouji, it is ultimately "unreasonable" to behave in such a manner. A lack of understanding in this "reason" results in producing an uncouth wild man. The true warrior who understands *bushido* takes the more difficult road when serving his temporal master. It is easy to do whatever one pleases but the act of restraint is one which Yuuzan Daidouji argues forms the man and makes him distinguishable from commoners. Yuuzan Daidouji distinguishes between civility and boorishness as he does between right and wrong. Perhaps that is also why he encourages the warrior to take up aesthetic endeavors in addition to his physical training:

> Though Bushido naturally implies first of all the qualities of strength and forcefulness, to have this one side only developed is to be nothing but a rustic samurai of no great account. So a samurai ought certainly to be literate, and, if he has time, should take up verse-making or Teaism to a certain extent. (105)

To Nitobe, the samurai is a pristine vassal of heavenly virtues, of the Chinese "*Chi, Jin, Yu*, respectively, Wisdom, Benevolence, and Courage" (94). To Yuuzan

Daidouji, the Japanese warrior is of a more tempered and civilized manifestation of etiquette and restraint. In either case, one can make a clear distinction that *bushido* represents a call to higher purposes and better conduct than that which is expected of ordinary men. We may also begin to distinguish that the true samurai is one who is also associated with the nobility, where verse-making and tea ceremony were more commonly practiced.

In the courtly life of *Yvain* the noble status of the knight is found everywhere. Despite the ambiguities of Yvain's ability to fulfill his knightly duties and the tendencies of the reader either to overlook these shortcomings and elevate him as a great warrior or focus on his faults and condemn the hero outright, Yvain is still capable of displaying many of the key qualities of the virtuous medieval knight. Yvain's place in the medieval court, his noble birth and proper bearing grant him tremendous power and a wealth of resources from which he can draw to perform valorous deeds. Because Yvain is suitably equipped, or blessed, with such position and wealth, it seems natural that the hero, due to his good lot in life, would naturally perform virtuous deeds. It is from the examples of truly valorous men that society as a whole draws inspiration, solace, and comfort. Nitobe identifies for us a Japanese parallel:

> Chivalry is a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom; nor is it a dried-up specimen of an antique virtue preserved in the herbarium of our history. It is still a living object of power and beauty among us; and if it assumes no tangible shape or form, it no less scents the moral atmosphere, and makes us aware that we are still under its potent spell. (1)

There is no doubt that when Nitobe uses "chivalry" he means "bushido." His passion for his intangible subject has tangibility in the representations of samurai word and deed in Japan's literature, history, and even contemporary senses of self-identity. Powerful images of what are considered to be representations of this are readily found in the pages of the *Heike Monogatari*:

> A cloudlike host of armored bowmen from Shikoku and Chinzei stood in ranks on archery platforms at the front of the stronghold, each of them reputed to be worth a thousand men. Ten or twenty rows of saddled horses waited below the platforms, and there was a constant din of beating drums and shouted battle cries. The full-drawn bows were like half-moons at the warriors' breasts; the glittering three-foot swords resembled streaks of autumn frost crossing their hips. The countless red banners unfurled on the heights danced like leaping flames in the spring breeze. (295-6)

The images of warriors standing fearless awaiting battle closely associated with the images of nature appear to deepen the significance of the organic role of the samurai warrior, elevating him to a participatory role in universal truths and the absolute immutability of the universe, within which he is only a transient creature. But the clearest representations of the fighting man are not in the presentation of his awaiting battle but in the engaging of the enemy. It is in the contexts of battle where the warrior's identity crystallizes. Samurai deeds, cultivated by a foundational base of loyalty and honed by a disciplined mind and body, are demonstrated in a spectacular manner on the battlefield:

> The massed Genji and Heike armies met in mingled combat, the riders charging by turns and vying to announce their names. Their shouts and yells awoke echoes in the mountains; the hoofbeats of their galloping horses reverberated like thunder; the arrows they exchanged resembled falling rain. Some men retired to the rear, carrying the wounded on their shoulders; some sustained light injuries and fought on; some suffered mortal blows and perished. There were those who rode alongside enemies, grappled with them, fell, and died in dagger fights; there were those who

> seized others, held them down, and cut off their heads; there were those who had their heads cut off. (310-11)

Just as in any of our discussions of chivalry and *bushido*, the codified conduct of the warrior class is exemplified rather than stated. The romanticized images of warriors drawing their bows, grasping their swords, and standing proud among the rows of fluttering banners evokes powerful images easily associated with strength, virility, and fighting prowess. Samurai warriors live and breathe to fight. Their very identity and nature are either to take heads or die in the attempt doing so. They do this out of service to both liege lord and to nature itself.

Although the representations of feudal warrior deeds and virtues can seem to be an elevated form of living, the stark reality of feudal warrior life is a sharp contrast to that which we find in the fictions which attempt to mediate their experience. The samurai and European knight were both slaves to their masters' wishes. They were subject to all kinds of demands, most of which would never find themselves in the pages of literature. The knight and samurai of legend and verse, in such a context, was to the warrior an enormous abstraction from his own immediate experience. At some point, the ideal warrior image in literature detaches itself from the immediate warriors and makes the ideal too transcendent, far beyond the reach of ordinary mortals who wear mail and live by the sword and the arrow. Keen notes this discrepancy nicely:

> For St Bernard, contrasting in his *De laude novae militae* the effete and luxurious secular knighthood with the Templars 'who deck themselves not in gold and silver, but with faith within the mail and without, to strike terror, not avarice, into the hearts of their enemies,' the crusader becomes virtually the exclusive type of true chivalry, and the crusader at that who is fired by single-minded religious zeal—'you who have truly confessed

> from the heart.' Even among crusaders, those whom he regarded as the only true knights can never have been more than a handful. We begin to see that the high ecclesiastical idea of chivalry suffers from a limitation ultimately very similar to that which inhibits the usefulness of the romances for purposes of definition: it is too idealistic. Where the romances offer reflection of life that is too superb, it makes reality look mean by contrasting it with an inaccessible measure of dedication. (5)

This inaccessibility of lofty knighthood was not lost on the author or authors of the *Heike Monogatari* nor on Chrétien de Troyes. Perhaps it is for this realization that the quality of Yvain's knight is not expressly criticized, while samurai warriors in the *Tale of the Heike* are permitted to cheat, betray, lie, and plot within their unique cultural contexts of ingenuity and resourcefulness. The purposes for the construction of such tales and legends requires closer scrutiny. Chrétien de Troyes' ironical presentation of the unjudged Yvain is possibly a very subtle statement that knighthood, as it is known in the text, has a questionable set of criteria within it as is the reality of the virtuous nature of the knights themselves. The model of knighthood, a popular subject with Chrétien, may still be the form against which knights are held, but the form itself and the process of holding men up to it in comparison may both be implicitly challenged. The *Heike Monogatari*'s treatment of the same question differs, but in essence the result is the same. Samurai virtues are exemplified as great warriors and their deeds in contrast to normal men are superhuman. To these grand, and at times fantastic, encounters the rank and file warrior must measure himself. It is a seeming contradiction, then, when we find these same warriors performing unscrupulous acts of treachery, betrayal, and ruthlessness throughout the *Heike Monogatari*, but

this text, like *Yvain*, glosses over the grim realities of samurai existence. No moral judgements are pronounced.

Despite the harshness of conditions, the continued threat of violence and death, and the grim realities of the battlefield, the emphasis on proper warrior conduct in each respective culture is unmistakable. This text argues that the *Heike Monogatari* emphasizes loyalty above all other samurai virtues, that it is the lynchpin of all samurai conduct. Loyalty was also the primary feudal virtue in a Western context and also served the interests of his liege, as well as the Church:

> As a good churchman, he (Etienne de Fougeres, Bishop of Lisieux) sees it as the knight's business to be the strong right arm of the Church, which should do the bidding of the superior clerical order—and without too much questioning. (Keen 4)

Just as loyalty is of central importance to *bushido* and the point from which all other virtues are linked, the same association is true for what we find in the representations of chivalry in the European model. Although the notion of loyalty in the medieval romance may differ in that the knight can be loyal to his lover rather than his lord, loyalty is still the central definitive reference point from which other virtues are defined. Nitobe links the two cultural representations of chivalry with his translation of chivalric terminology:

> The Japanese word which I have roughly rendered Chivalry, is, in the original, more expressive than Horsemanship. *Bu-shi-do* means literally Military – Knight – Ways—the ways which fighting nobles should observe in their daily life as well as in their vocation; in a word the "Precepts of Knighthood," the *noblesse oblige* of the warrior class. (4-5)

The "precepts of knighthood" as a calling for a higher life, a fuller existence, are central to the literatures which promote its vocation above all others, its inherent

virtues are those to which all men ought aspire. Loyalty binds both knight and samurai to their lords and the "precepts of knighthood" define this relationship in very noble and honorable terms. The construction of this relationship between lord and vassal is completely deliberate. Nothing is left to chance which could erode or subvert this power structure. Within the context of the development of knighthood and samurai codes of behavior, both ensure that this power structure remains intact and cultivate within the warrior a strong self-identity through these hierarchical constructions. To what extent this cultivation of character is a facade simply to maintain this relationship between lord and vassal is certainly open to speculation. The political necessity of establishing a strong martial presence is often fraught with dubious motivations. Nitobe, would likely argue that virtues were cultivated for the sake of their own beauty and inherent aesthetic worth and that social position was mostly held as what is equitable with social responsibility:

> The bushi held that his high social position demanded a loftier standard of veracity than that of the tradesman and peasant. *Bushi no ichi-gon*—the word of a samurai, or in exact German equivalent, *Rittersworl*—was sufficient guaranty for the truthfulness of an assertion. His word carried such weight with it that promises were generally made and fulfilled without a written pledge, which would have been deemed quite beneath his dignity. (62)

We can see examples of Nitobe's argument in both the *Heike Monogatari* and *Yvain*. Samurai warriors pledge their lives to their superiors and are usually committed until death to maintain that covenant. Yvain too, although failing Lunette for a time, keeps his word to seek out fortune, to avenge himself on the fountain knight, to fight devils, and to rescue imprisoned maidens. Loyalty formulates the necessity of oath-taking and oath-keeping. This relational binding

quality of oaths is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Although the ends may be suspect in terms of the motives of feudal lords, the means appear to have virtue and the quality of inherent goodness.

Within the codes of samurai conduct and knighthood we can find codified forms of behavior which are linked not only to the social class and group dynamic which defines it but also to a supposed set of higher morals and ethics. Although we can concede that his codified type of conduct is hardly ever defined in specific rules or specific directives, we also cannot exclude that the knight or samurai acted in the manners in which they did because their roles in society determined how they ought to conduct their affairs or that they acted in the ways they did due to carefully constructed personal ethics. The definitive qualities of the samurai and the knight are extremely complex and contain a tremendous number of competing influences. Huizinga addresses a primary influence on knightly definition in observing that:

> The conception of chivalry as a sublime form of secular life might be defined as an aesthetic ideal assuming the appearance of an ethical ideal. Heroic fancy and romantic sentiment form its basis. But medieval thought did not permit ideal forms of noble life, independent of religion. For this reason piety and virtue have to be the essence of a knight's life. Chivalry, however, will always fall short of this ethical function. Its earthly origin draws it down. For the source of the chivalrous idea is pride aspiring to beauty, and formalized pride gives rise to a conception of honour, which is the pole of noble life. (42)

Ethical constructs, as represented respectively in Buddhism and Christianity, are heavy influences on the cultural identity of the fighting man. Kiyomori is chastised for wearing armor under his monk's robes by Shigemori and is ultimately punished for his rash acts against the Buddhas. In contrast to the

phenomena of Buddhist retribution, the divine in *Yvain* is not as easily identified as a participatory element in cajoling and motivating the hero throughout the text. Yvain can be seen, to some degree, to have been given a second chance to redeem himself after he has betrayed his contract with Laudine. From falling into madness he is granted opportunities to discover mercy and compassion in rescuing the lion and from that point onwards is moved to keep his oaths and bonds as he becomes the exemplar of Christian virtue. In both works, religion features prominently as the element which fans the flames of individual motive. But despite the best intentions of more divine callings, the secular world of swords, ambitions, and relationships continually pull warriors away from the perfect models of their supposed conduct. Ethics as a mediating element of samurai and knightly identity ultimately fails as the imperfections of temporal existence from which men come has a much heavier influence than we are initially inclined to believe.

Perhaps it is with this irreconcilable situation that Chrétien de Troyes and the narrator or narrators of the *Heike Monogatari* begin their tales in the ways in which they do. If we examine each text in terms of what may be the author's realization of the difficulties facing the fighting man we may clearly see what they see in the vassals of feudal lords. *The Tale of the Heike* states its thesis plainly from the outset:

> The sound of the Gion Shoja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the sala flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind. (23)

The Gion Shoja bells spell out clearly much of what the larger theme is of the *Heike Monogatari*. The ambitions and devices of men are temporal and physically impermanent. The Buddhist tones of the beginning of the *Tale of the Heike* may draw Western readers to hear the biblical echo of Psalm 103:15-16—"As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." The *Heike Monogatari* is a collection of episodes which support its primary Buddhist statement of the nature of man and his place in the universe. The proud ambitions of mortals is, in the context of an ever changing and evolving reality, nothing more than brief petals falling from sala flowers.

Chrétien's *Yvain* begins its own tale by framing it with the statement that love, as it was known years long past, has changed radically into what knights of the present believe they know:

> Some knights talked of recent events; others were speaking of love, the tribulations and the sorrows and the blessings that often come to the disciples of his order. At that time Love's order was still fine and flourishing. Now, alas, there are very few disciples; nearly all have deserted him so that Love is held in disrepute. In olden days Love's disciples were known for courtesy and bravery, generosity and honor. Now *love* has become an idle word. Those who know nothing of his order maintain they love, but they lie. They have no right to talk. In their boasting, love is but an idle tale and a lie. (257)

In truth, according to our opening, love has become "an idle tale and a lie." Knights of the time of this text's writing do not know about love and it is also inferred that they also know nothing of the other virtues of courtesy, bravery, generosity, and honor also associated with it. It is against this statement that Yvain is played against and it is for the reader to determine how well he maintains

his discipleship to love. In both the *Heike Monogatari* and *Yvain* we see how the main body of the text is reflected against the openings, how each subtly explores the larger thematic qualities of the stories presented. This juxtaposition also permits the author or authors the freedom to not have to spell out exact meanings and interpretations. The onus is completely on the readership.

These two texts require several readings in order to better understand the sub-texts hidden within them. We need to get inside the text to begin to imagine and test hypotheses to discover why these writers constructed these works in the manners in which they did in the first place. Peter Haidu argues that medieval authors differed very little in some respects from contemporary writers. Each writes with the conscious intent of addressing concerns perceived in the contexts in which they live. In his article, "The Hermit's Pottage: Deconstruction and History in *Yvain*," he writes:

> I have suggested elsewhere that the development of fiction in the Middle Ages is to be considered *per se* as inherently deconstructive of that period's constitutive philosophical and theological presuppositions: that is an historical view of deconstruction at the gross cultural level. The existence and importance of those presuppositions at the level of the properly philosophical and theological developments of the period—what, within the terms of that period, can be called its *scientia*—is undoubted. The difficulty arises when one focuses not on that intellectual tradition supported, sponsored, and ultimately used by the Church, but on that other tradition which for long functioned as an anti-tradition, an unofficial, unrecognized, and hence anti-positioned semiotic system within the same geographical, political, and historical sphere. (1983,143)

The "other tradition" which existed parallel to the "scientia" of the period, and which possessed its own intellectual traditions, existed within the literature of the court. This same literary tradition which served to entertain, but also teach that

which could or would not be stated openly by existing institutions, was the counter-culture of the medieval world. In the instance of *Yvain*, Haidu argues that it is the use of irony itself which deconstructs or rather is "anti-traditional," "unofficial," and is also at initial readings "unrecogniz(able)."

Deconstruction at this level is not a dismissal of meaning, truth, or relevance, but rather, a challenge to society's traditional conservatively held values and assumptions. It is in essence, the catalyst for societal change and growth. The *Heike Monogatari*, to no extent as ironical as *Yvain*, possesses a similar curious construction. Just like *Yvain*'s opening assertion that life is in a state of change and decay, the text begins with the bold statements that life is temporal. The next few hundred pages then depict with tremendous detail how men fight, struggle, suffer horribly, and are annihilated in the pursuit of name, status, and reputation. Although we are hesitant to say that the *Heike Monogatari* deconstructs *bushido*, we can find within this contrast of impermanence and vanity the implied question. We must also keep in mind that although the hint of such a question may exist in the *Heike Monogatari*, evidence for it is only made through suppositions stemming through these lines of inquiry. Even though such inquiry has its limitations, the opening passage of the text gives us room to reflect upon the true meaning of existence, the nature of being, and the search for identity. The lingering question of why samurai should exist cannot be ignored.

The distance that we find between the author's opening statement and the depictions of samurai conduct scattered throughout the *Heike Monogatari* exposes the fractures of continuity in theme and reveals to us some of the motivation in its

construction through its various interpretations. The text as a whole begs questions as to what purpose it served in the fourteenth century, what motivated the new revisions, and what goals it hopes to reach as a new aesthetic hybrid. Herbert Plutschow, in his "The Placatory Nature of The Tale of the Heike: Additional Documents and Thoughts," argues that the *Heike Monogatari* is essentially a placatory text which worked to maintain the new fragile peace in Japan which was established after a long period of chaos and bloodshed. Focussing primarily on the episode of the drowning of the child emperor, Antoku, Plutschow demonstrates in the *Enkei* and *Kakuichi* versions of the *Heike Monogatari* a traceable attempt to soften the child's tragic death to that of an elevation of the emperor's identity as a manifestation of the mythical dragon who has a powerful influence on nature and the cosmos themselves. Although the death of the child emperor is wrong on all accounts, the promotion of the dead child to that of deity makes the death more palatable and acceptable to a people mourning their dead monarch. The text, as an aesthetic work, has impressive repercussions in the political climate of medieval Japan and acts as a balm on the war wounds of a people recovering from conflict. Plutschow argues that the intense scrutiny of the relationship between the *Heike Monogatari* as an aesthetic work and the political climate to which it is targeted would:

> show that the heroes and the reciters of the Heike were related to one another and to the heterogeneous religious rituals and deities in a multidimensional, grandiose scheme through which the nation sought to rid itself of its past violence and the bad conscience it was causing. By trying to associate Antoku's death with mythical traditions concerning the creation of Japan, the *Heike*'s reciters seem to have abided by a historical determinism from which Japan seeks delivery. In the light of these facts, it

> is evident that the *Tale* was recited for placatory, and not exclusively artisitc, purposes. (78)

Plutschow identifies for us a significant consideration in the *Heike Monogatari* and that is to continually maintain that artistic work often has social, if not political, associations and contexts. The social environment in which the *Heike Monogatari* was both created, recited, revised, and read was one of continual change and turbulence. It seems quite reasonable to view the *Heike Monogatari* as a text that attempts to bridge some of the gaps which had grown between the Genji and Heike clans.

The fictional strategies of these representations also bears the need for our attention. How samurai and knights are represented is also of central concern in terms of understanding the purposes of the text as a whole. Butler, in his "The *Heike Monogatari* and the Japanese Warrior Ethic", uncovers different representations of the same characters in different versions of the *Heike Monogatari*. In the *Kamakura* text of 1300, Sanemori is not old and is not romanticized to the same extent as in other versions. The episodes of troops retreating or fleeing are hardly cited in the *Kakuichi* text. Butler also asserts that increasingly more of the *Kakuichi* seems more fictionally than historically accurate in terms of its representations of heroic action (103). To him, the method of mediation, specifically that of battle tales sung, most certainly have attributed to the types of descriptions of the battles and how such descriptions must have an evocative affect on the audience (104). The methods of mediation are inseparable from the messages themselves. How the author speaks is also what he is saying.

This ought not be such a novel idea but when consciously aware of this relationship between audience, author, and text, we see that the work as a whole, its motivations in its construction and revisions and its potential impact on the audience, no longer operates isolated without context, but acts as part of a larger whole, as a participatory agent in interacting aesthetic and social contexts.

This interactive environment also affords the author or authors the ability to avoid being dragged into political debate or argument. In both Chrétien's *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari* a kind of aesthetic distance exists between the author or authors and the opening texts as no judgements are made and no summary conclusion is given to the reader. The events and experiences of fighting men are to stand on their own merit and the reader is left to interpret them for himself or herself. Peter Haidu, in his "Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes" maintains that Chrétien de Troyes, in order to avoid direct statements regarding the central meaning of his work boldly stated, refrains from judgement, remains impartial, and cultivates a playful field of contrasting images and meanings:

> In the art of Chrétien de Troyes the reader's imaginative life is expanded in a universe of structural fantasy offered for his delight form a perspective which unites pleasure and moral awareness. The full enjoyment of these romances is savored from a distance which both defines and reaffirms the reader's moral and aesthetic freedom. (263)

The conscious act of mimesis is addressed by Howard Bloch as he writes:

> On the surface, the notion of aesthetic mediation seems to differ qualitatively from its mimetic equivalent since it implies an act of deflection toward pleasurable substitutes for action instead of imitation. In fact, they amount to the same, except that the aesthetic conception focuses upon an identification which occurs at a secondary stage in the mediatory process. Those who conceive of mediation as aesthetic in nature tend to

> stress the act of self –consciousness preceding adoption of an appropriate course of action. (197)

This difference in content and expression of it need not be perceived as problematic. The differences which exist between authorial intent and representational text, as well as those differences which exist between cultural representations of the warrior, can add to and deepen our understanding and appreciation of a larger aesthetic whole. The "deconstruction" of these medieval texts does not necessarily destroy or diminish their significance, but rather, enlightens for us the layers of nuance, tenor, and tone that exist within them. When we look at the *Heike Monogatari* in its development over time and its fractures and reconstructed presentation we are exposed to the multifocal purposes of the text's construction. Whether the text's goals have been to salve the wounds of a broken land divided between two powerful factions, to define samurai conduct and ethics, or to act as a religious text addressing the concerns of man's place in an ever changing universe, we can neither say are singular or multiple. We can merely theorize inconclusively but, nevertheless, sufficiently to understand more clearly the world of competing forces which developed the samurai and knight and influenced how each ought to conduct himself in relation to his household, his lord, and the society around him.

Discovering the truth of the lives of samurai and knights in the records we have of them in both history and fictions can seem to be an almost impossible task. Whenever a close definition appears to come through the text another interpretation surfaces. The definitive identity of the fighting man, his codes of

conduct and behavior, eternally elude the modern reader. The *Heike Monogatari*, in its multiple readings and revisions, uses the role of the samurai to explore and express various religious, political, and aesthetic objectives. Chrétien de Troyes, in his *Yvain*, plays with both his characters and his reader in his own explorations of defining humanity in the contexts of socially prescribed codes of conduct. The characters we find in the texts of *Yvain* and the *Heike Monogatari* are most certainly representations of what the warrior was supposed to be but these figures are extremely complex in their development, motivation, and identity. But despite these complexities, the authors of these texts have made sure to present them in ways which are evocative and powerful, sublime and ferocious. They are images of man impressed firmly on the mind as what he can be as both the strong arm of a temporal master, as well as that of the individual focussed intensely on developing and growing into an unstoppable force--simple in conception yet multifocal in expression.

Although truth may be stranger than fiction, there may also be truth in our fiction and lies in our histories. Sometimes what appears to be "historical truth" is not much more than a deceitful or misleading account of the past while poems, songs, and novels may be more truthful on a more fundamental level than such accounts. The mediation of history, when closely examined, is not only a revelation of the unreliable nature of historians, but to greater and lesser extents, also a revelation that what human nature seems to need is often expressed in idealistic qualities. In our comparative explorations of mediaeval romance and historical narrative we can cite ample texts which express the belief in the

necessity for societal and human ideals. The *Heike Monogatari* has exaggerated representations of the warrior ideal in historical figures who were actually normal flawed mortal men who ate breakfast, did usual things like complain that the weather was too hot or too cold, and who had their fair share of both physical and psychological warts and imperfections. Chrétien's Yvain, the knightly hero, is exposed through ironical devices that reveal his character's flaws and shortcomings. As a result, his true knighthood is embedded in ambiguity. In both medieval texts we find uncanny parallels not only in each society's need to develop warrior classes and codes through which to govern them, but also in the literatures which mediate these codes. In developing a believable representation of the truly virtuous fighting man, these medieval authors must balance their fabulous and fantastic representation of the hero against interior worlds of the men who live inside the armor.

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